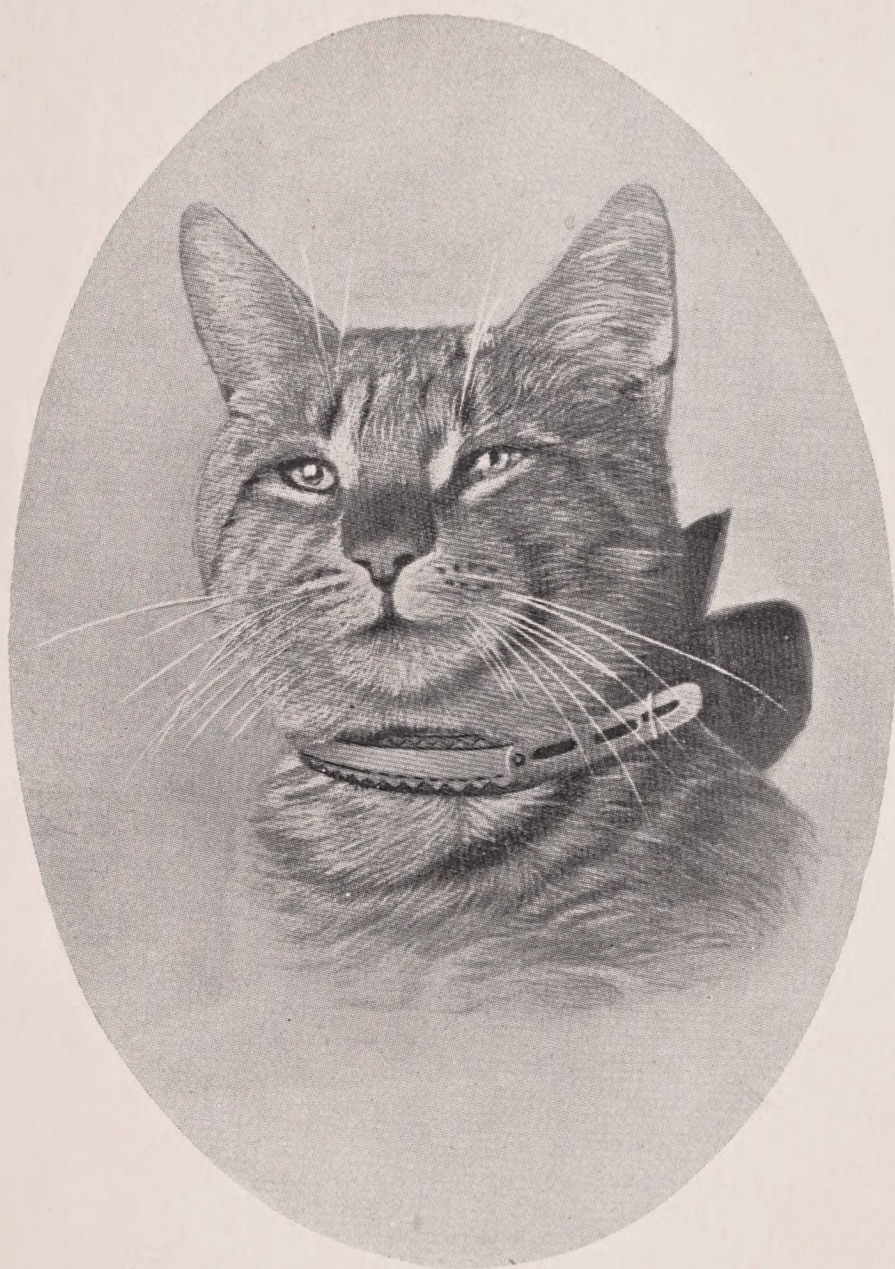






LITTLE COMRADE



“Kameradchen”

LITTLE COMRADE

The Story of a Cat

AND

Other Animal Stories

By

GABRIELLE E. JACKSON

Author of

"BIG JACK,"

"THE COLBURN PRIZE,"

"LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE," ETC.



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Gabrielle E. Jackson

CONTENTS

	PAGE
LITTLE COMRADE,	11
TED AND HIS "SERGEANT,"	95
A LITTLE DERELICT,	141
MADGE HARDING'S "CURMUDGE,"	161

LITTLE COMRADE

LITTLE COMRADE

CHAPTER I

THE CAT

“**S**AY, Bess, will you do it? It will be just dandy! Why, there isn’t a girl in Totem Harbor who can ride as you do.”

“Maybe there isn’t, but if she can’t ride any better than I can ride on *that* miserable old thing, I’m sorry for her, and that’s all I can say,” and Bess Clifton gave a disgusted poke with her foot toward a bicycle which lay upon the ground at her feet.

“Oh, but can’t we fix it up? Do something to it that will make it hump itself just for that one day if it never humps again? I say, it’s just going to be a shame if you’ve got to get left,” and the boy flung himself

STORIES OF ANIMALS

down upon the grass beside the girl, and thumped the sod viciously to give vent to his feelings.

“Fix it up? If you could fix *me down* perhaps that would come nearer to setting matters straight. It isn’t the bicycle that’s all wrong, it’s mostly me. Mother says she will have to put a brick on my head to keep me from stretching out any longer in order to keep me decently clothed; for she and I no sooner get a gown finished than the one we made just before it has to be let down about a mile. Look at that! I spent the whole blessed morning yesterday letting down that hem, and I’ll wager five cents next week it will have to be let down again. No wonder my bicycle can’t keep up with me. But I oughtn’t to say one word against it, for I have had it five whole years, and if that wheel hasn’t done stunts no wheel ever did. But, oh! I *do* wish I could afford a new one.” Bess tossed back her hair impa-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

tiently, and then dropped her brown hands in her lap.

“Why don’t you ask your mother for one? If she knew that you wanted one so badly for this contest I bet anything she’d get you one.”

“Yes, and go without something she wants, or needs, dreadfully herself! Not if I know it! That’s just the point; I don’t want her to even *suspect* how much I want it. You see, Bert Steward, that is the difference ‘’twixt Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee.’ If you want anything all you have to do is to ask for it, and your father can give it to you and not mind the expense. When *I* get anything new that little mother of mine has to just hustle for it, and I’m not going to let her hustle for luxuries, not if I know it, and when it’s necessities I’ll help do the hustling. But hustling or no hustling, we do have good times together, and she’s the best little mother in the land.”

STORIES OF ANIMALS

A very tender light came into brownie Bess's eyes as she looked off over the beautiful waters of Totem Harbor.

The boy beside her glanced up quickly, then, reaching over, began to pull up handfuls of the clover which grew all about them and to mutter, boy-fashion: "You bet she is." Slang, to be sure, but ten times more eloquent than if he had said in the most correct English: "I quite agree with you."

Bess Clifton and Bert Steward were chums in every sense of the word. For several years their parents had spent every summer at Totem Harbor, occupying two of the many pretty cottages which dotted the shore for several miles, although the Stewards' cottage was a far more pretentious one than that occupied by the Cliftons. A warm friendship had sprung up between the two families, and almost in their baby days the boy and girl had sought

STORIES OF ANIMALS

each other, and the companionship so begun had ripened into a stanch friendship which apparently grew stronger as the children grew older, until at the ages of thirteen and fourteen they were as jolly a pair of chums as one could wish to see, sharing each other's pleasures, reading each other's books, laying plans together, and teasing each other as only a boy and girl can.

Unlike as possible in personal appearance as well as in disposition, they passed their days in the utmost harmony, for neither was given to carrying the tormenting to excess, and each had a pretty level head in spite of being an only son and an only daughter, whom pessimists asserted must of necessity be spoiled. But the spoiling process had certainly not begun yet, for a bonnier, happier, more courteous lad and lassie it would have been difficult to find, in spite of their fun and pranks.

Bess was tall for her age, with delicate

STORIES OF ANIMALS

features, and a perfect gypsy coloring, which the three months spent at the shore each year turned into "a regular little darky brown," as Mr. Steward told her, "with only enough of the rose left in her cheeks to save her from being mistaken for Susan, the cook." Her hair matched the brown of her eyes, and was the trial of her life, for it was as straight as an Indian's and so fine in texture that it defied all bonds and flew at its own sweet will despite combs, pins, and braids.

Bert showed the old English blood from which he got his name, and few boys of his age could boast such a figure or such skin. Five feet five in his stockings, tipping the scales at one hundred and twenty-two pounds, straight as a young sapling, and with a finely shaped head set upon a pair of broad shoulders, he was good indeed to look at. If the head was thatched with a very curly golden thatch which the owner

STORIES OF ANIMALS

failed to appreciate, and labored most industriously to reduce to straight strings by sousing in the wash basin a dozen times a day, and the blue eyes needed the aid of glasses to bring objects within their range of vision, nobody seemed to regard these as the least detrimental to the laddie's appearance. More than one older person would turn to look at the pair when, decked in their bathing toggery, they raced over the sandy beach to win first plunge, and, never caring a whit for the grown-ups, splashed each other and enjoyed life as it can only be enjoyed "when life is young."

It was the first week in July, and in August a fête was to be given at one of the large hotels in Totem Harbor, when all sorts of contests would be in order, and among them a bicycle race for girls between twelve and fifteen. Bess had ridden ever since she was a child of eight, and she and Bert had scoured the country for miles

STORIES OF ANIMALS

around. Bert expected to enter several of the boys' contests, but, with the exception of the bicycle race for the girls, there seemed, as yet, nothing for Bess, as she was not an expert at tennis, and her one other accomplishment, rowing, had no place in the girls' sports.

"I shall have to give it up, and that's all about it," she said; "for get a new bicycle I just can't, and ride this one I *canter!* How's that for English?" and the red lips parted in a merry laugh to display a row of white, even teeth.

"Oh, fudge! it can't be given up. It's just *got* to go through in some way. What's the use of your having worked all winter in a gymnasium getting up your muscle if you can't have something to show for it this summer? We've just *got* to think up a way, so stir up your noddle and do it."

They were sitting upon the grassy, wooded bluff overlooking Totem Harbor,

STORIES OF ANIMALS

with its myriads of pretty islands dotted like emeralds upon a bed of diamonds, for the waters of the bay, dancing in the sunshine, reflected in the children's eyes and caused them to blink.

Just then the sharp toot-toot of a whistle made them look toward the dock about a quarter of a mile to their left to see a small launch put off and make its way rapidly toward an island which lay a mile off shore. "Wonder who's got left this time?" commented the boy, picking up a pebble and tossing it into the water below him.

"Someone, you may bet a round cooky on that; they always do. Wonder why they don't start just about two seconds sooner, so long as they know that they've got to start anyway," replied the girl.

As though in answer to their questions a voice just behind them caused them to turn suddenly as a gentleman asked:

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Can you young people tell us whether there is any way of our getting over to Clarke’s Island now that the launch has been inconsiderate enough to leave us behind?”

There was a rapid exchange of glances between Bess and Bert, and their lips twitched, but they answered politely:

“No, sir, we can’t, for the launch makes only one trip a day, and will not come back until four o’clock.”

“It doesn’t look such a tremendous distance across,” said the lady. “Don’t you suppose we could find someone to row us over? I should not in the least mind going that way if it might be in such a beautiful little boat as that one down there,” and she pointed to a handsome steel craft which danced as lightly as a feather upon the water just below them.

“Do you know whether it is a private or a public boat?” asked the gentleman.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Perhaps we might hire the owner to take us over.”

“It’s my boat,” answered Bert, “and I’ll be very glad to row you over if you would like to have me. Bess and I were just thinking of taking a pull ourselves, and we’d as soon go to the island as anywhere.”

“What is the fare?” asked the gentleman, smiling.

“Oh, that’s all right,” answered the boy, blushing at the thought of being misunderstood.

Quicker than her husband to note the blush and guess its cause, the lady interposed:

“Mr. Chester is a great tease, but we will accept your kind offer, and feel very grateful for your service, too. Would you mind telling us your names that we may know to whom we are indebted?” and she smiled at Bess, who was looking at her in her bright, happy way.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“My name is Bess Cliffton, and I live in that little cottage just over there. His is Bert Steward, and that is his home,” she replied as she pointed to a pretty villa tucked away among the trees behind them.

“We will go for a voyage with the two B’s; that will be a unique experience which none of the rest of our party, steaming away so unconcernedly in the launch out yonder, will be able to boast,” and she laughed as she followed her husband and the young people down the steps to the little landing.

In a few moments Bert and Bess had their passengers safely on board, and each taking a pair of oars they leaned back to the long, steady strokes which sent the beautiful little craft flying over the water. They made a pretty picture as their lithe young figures swayed back and forth in perfect rhythm, and their faces grew flushed and their eyes bright with the healthful exercise.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

Clarke's Island was one of the show places of the harbor, and a favorite resort for those dwelling upon the mainland. A small steam launch made a daily trip to and fro, leaving Totem Harbor at ten each morning, and returning at four in the afternoon. The island was owned by a man named Marion Clarke, who spent about five months of each year there, living the life of a recluse, with an old housekeeper to look to the care of the servants and minister to his personal wants. Years before, while still a young man, he had bought the island and built the handsome house in which he was now living, furnishing it luxuriously, and beautifying the land about it. When all was completed he had brought his bride there, and they had spent a summer of unqualified delight, leaving it late in the autumn to go abroad for an extended trip. Years passed without their return, and in the interval no expense was spared to keep

STORIES OF ANIMALS

the island in perfect order and ready to receive its master and mistress at any moment. In the course of time it became a perfect fairyland, and was visited by the guests staying at the summer resorts all along the shore. It was about a mile and a half long, and possibly half a mile wide. At its east end a small pavilion had been built, where the caretaker served a dainty luncheon each day, and made a nice profit for himself and family, which consisted of his wife and little crippled son. The west end of the island was divided off by a high wire fence, which protected the owner from too curious visitors, and gave the seclusion he seemed to desire above all other things in this world. He was never seen by those who visited the island, and for some unaccountable reason, or no reason at all, for so things have a trick of shaping in this odd world, had gradually acquired the reputation of being a parsimonious, disagreeable

STORIES OF ANIMALS

man. He rarely left the island, and was never known to have a visitor. How he passed his time was entirely a matter of speculation to his distant neighbors, and it is needless to add that their imaginations left nothing wanting.

It did not take Bert and Bess long to row across and land their passengers at the dock, where they were rapturously welcomed by the party which had preceded them. Mrs. Chester paused a moment to bid the young captain and first mate good-by, and to thank them for their kindness, but Mr. Chester drew Bert one side to say:

“If you will not name a price for your ferrying, you must let me make a little present to you and the young lady. Invest it in a box of Huyler’s and eat to our health,” he said as he offered Bert a two-dollar bill.

“Oh, no! You mustn’t! We don’t want anything for doing it. We were glad to.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

It was just fun," protested Bert, promptly putting his hands behind him and backing away as though he feared personal violence.

Mr. Chester began to laugh as he followed him up, saying:

"Oh, but you must; we don't have such pilots every day—we wish to show our appreciation," and he nodded very positively as he forced the bill into the boy's unwilling hand.

"I don't know what father will say. He'll think I'm a fine fellow to let people pay me for doing a little thing like this."

"Tell him I insisted upon it for the sake of the first mate." Mr. Chester bowed and waved his hand as he turned to rejoin his wife.

"Come on, Bess," called Bert, as he sprang into the boat. A moment later Bess had taken her place in the stern, leaving the captain to pull slowly along the shore in the direction of Mr. Clarke's dwelling.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

They were barely ten yards from the shore when, chancing to glance toward it, Bess cried excitedly:

“Oh, Bert, look quick! See that magnificent cat sitting on that rock over there! She must be watching for a fish. Let’s stop a minute and look at her.”

Now if there was one thing in this world which Bess Clifton loved more than another it was a cat, and if mystical discrimination may be assigned as one of that animal’s peculiarities, cats certainly knew her weakness, and promptly took advantage of it upon all occasions.

Her surmises regarding this particular cat were correct, for the next instant puss reached her dainty paw into the water, drew it quickly back and landed as fine a catch as ever gladdened a cat’s palate.

“Row ashore this minute!” cried Bess. “I’ve got to see that cat if Money-bags Clarke kills me for the trespass.”

CHAPTER II

“JUST AS EASY AS—AS——”

AS the boat grated upon the beach the cat looked up from her feast, but did not evince the least fear as the boy and girl drew nearer. The little fish was promptly disposed of, and with a final contented gulp puss eyed her unknown visitors and awaited developments.

“Pussykins; pussykins! Oh, do come here, kitty,” called Bess enticingly, as she scrambled out of the boat and walked toward the cat with hand extended.

“R-r-r-r-r-wow,” warbled puss in the throaty meow to which cats give voice when in a particularly affectionate mood, and, arching her back, rubbed against Bess’s gown.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Oh, you dear!” cried the girl, reaching down and lifting the cat gently into her arms. Then took place a little scene with just one person for audience, but he was so completely hidden by the trees that neither Bess nor Bert suspected his presence. Nearly half an hour passed before Puss and her visitors had admired each other to their mutual satisfaction, then with a parting hug and kiss upon the cat’s silky fur, Bess put her back upon the ground and returned to the boat. But the cat was evidently loath to have her new friends depart, and when they were pushing off ran along the shore, mewling for them to either return or to take her with them.

“I wish we *could* take you with us, pussy,” Bess called back, “but we mustn’t, for I dare say you belong to Billy Dixon, and he hasn’t much to make him happy, poor little chap. You can’t possibly be Mr. Clarke’s, because you are on the wrong side

STORIES OF ANIMALS

of the wire fence, and that runs straight into the water. Besides, I don't believe he would look at a cat, do you, Bert?"

"If he had any sense, he'd look at *that* one. I never saw such a dandy. Wish you could have it."

"Well we'll row over as often as ever we can to see it, and——" But before she could finish her sentence Bert burst in with:

"Bess, I've the brightest idea you ever heard of! What a chump I was not to think of it before. Listen. You know that people come over here every day, and hardly a day passes that someone isn't left; then there's a pretty fuss. Nobody has ever thought of starting a rowboat ferry to tote over the lag-behinds, so what's the matter with our doing it and earning the cash for a new wheel? We needn't expect to get a dollar a fare as we did to-day, but I bet you anything we could get ten cents just as easy

STORIES OF ANIMALS

as not, and that would count up pretty fast if we stuck to it." Bert leaned forward upon his oars to peer eagerly into Bess's face and gather the effect of his words.

"And make you work every day for something which wouldn't be yours after all? That would be a fine thing to do, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, nonsense! That's all right. I want you to enter the contest as much as you want to do it yourself, and it would be just fun to help. I think that it's a dandy scheme. Will you do it?"

"It would be all very dandy at first, but some day you'd want to go off with some of the boys or your father on the auto, then all the dandy of it would fly away, for you'd give them up to keep your bargain with me, and I'd feel meaner than a fiddler crab for letting you," and Bess shook her head solemnly, although her eyes had begun to

STORIES OF ANIMALS

sparkle at the thought of earning the bicycle by her own efforts.

“ Oh, see here now! You’ve *got* to. It’s such a splendid chance, and, honest, I’d love to do it. Will you? ”

“ I don’t question that you’d like to well enough,” protested Bess. “ What have I known you all these years for not to know that? But if we got the wheel in the end, it would really be half your earnings which bought it, and I’m not going to do it, so there now,” and Bess settled herself upon the stern seat as though her resolution were as firmly taken as her position.

“ Then I’ve got to *make* you say ‘ Yes,’ and that’s all about it, so here goes! ” Without more ado, splash went the oar into the water and a shower bath flew all over Bess’s clean gingham sailor suit.

“ Oh, you villain! Quit! Stop! You’ve drowned me! ”

“ Don’t care a cent! Mean to! Just

STORIES OF ANIMALS

what I'm going to do till you yell 'Yes'! Will you do it? Will you? Will you?" and souse, souse flew the salt water.

But Bess was pretty capable of sustaining her own side of the "battle," and, catching up the sponge from the bottom of the boat, promptly dipped it into the water and let a shower fly. For a few minutes the water splashed wildly over both of them, then defeat overtook Bess, for overboard fell her hat, and went calmly sailing away toward the Atlantic Ocean.

"Quick! quick! Catch it before it sinks," she screamed.

"Not till you promise! Will you?" demanded Bert, skillfully dropping his oars into the oarlocks and holding them poised for the stroke to be made the instant the promise was given.

"Get my hat! I promise! You've soaked all the starch and all the spunk out of me, too, you good-for-nothing boy," and Bess

STORIES OF ANIMALS

collapsed into her seat. The next instant the floating hat was fished out of the water and landed dripping in her lap, thereby putting the finishing stroke to the ducking.

“Now for mercy’s sake take me home and let me get into something dry; there isn’t a rag on me that isn’t sopping.”

“How about me?” and Bert shook his soaking shirt-sleeve.

Then the sky cleared and peals of laughter went ringing over the water to the leafy covert on the island where sat an elderly man who had watched the scene with absorbing interest, and as the squabble progressed a faint smile curved his lips, to vanish almost instantly in a pathetic sigh, and into his eyes crept a look of such intense longing that even the light-hearted occupants of the boat would have been touched by it, could they have seen it. As the boat and its laughing crew drew away, and finally passed beyond sight and hear-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

ing, the man turned wearily toward the west end of the island, murmuring softly: "Just the age, and so like my little Hearts-ease. God bless them and help me."

A few moments later the boat ran upon the sandy beach in front of Bess's home, and a voice from her piazza called:

"I've caught bluefish and blackfish in these waters, but never before have I seen redsnapper and whitefish landed."

"She's the snapper. She pretty nearly took my head off before I got her to promise something, and then she nearly drowned me."

"And herself as well for sweet friendship's sake?" queried Mrs. Clifton, as she walked down to the beach and leaned over the boat to speak to the boy and girl who were looking up at her, and to give a playful tweak to each ear.

"That's for misbehaving while beyond my ken."

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Yes, that’s right, Mrs. Clifton. Just give it to her, and then listen to me while I tell you how outrageously she’s been acting. It was just awful, I tell you,” and out scrambled Bert to put a very moist arm about Mrs. Clifton’s shoulders, while Bess slipped another about her waist from the other side, thereby sharing their affection and their salt water most impartially, while both talked as hard as their tongues could wag, and Mrs. Clifton did her best to make beginning or end of their story. But oh, dear me, how she liked it! What did clean shirt waists or carefully laundered piqué skirts count against this precious fellowship they were ready to give her?

And so the trio made their way across the lawn to the Clifftons’ piazza, where the recent events were rehearsed, while each tried to make her take the side of the speaker.

Twenty minutes later Bert ran down to the beach again, calling back as he went:

STORIES OF ANIMALS

"Didn't I do right to make her promise, Mrs. Clifton? I'm going to take the *Nautilus* up to the buoy now, and get everything ship-shape for our first trip. Good-by, Mrs. Clifton; good-by, first mate."

"Dear laddie," said Mrs. Clifton as he pulled off, and then drawing Bess to her side, she kissed the soft forehead, adding "Mother's thoughtful little daughter."

"The very bestest little mother I *ever* had," cried Bess, flinging her arms impulsively about her mother's neck, and then, breaking into a merry laugh, ran off to her room to get into something less suggestive of mermaids.

July had nearly passed and the date of the fête was drawing near. For four weeks Bert and Bess had plied their ferrying, and had met with even greater success than they had hoped for. At first their passengers consisted of the "left-overs," as Bess called the belated ones, but little by little the

STORIES OF ANIMALS

guests at the hotels about learned of the new ferry, and, novelty ever proving alluring, patronized it from choice. It was often hard to give up some trip, or fun planned by their young friends, and stick to business, but neither the boy nor the girl was of the sort which will lightly give up a cherished object, simply for want of perseverance in winning. So back and forth they pulled, once, twice, and often three times a day, and the pile of dimes grew marvelously. Bert was cashier, and tucked away their earnings in an old safe-deposit box his father had given him.

The first day of August they "took account of stock," so to speak. The box was opened and the contents counted. Sixteen dollars had been earned, which they carried to Mr. Steward and received in exchange a crisp ten, five, and one dollar bill. Locking these carefully in their box, they rushed down to the bathing houses to give vent to

STORIES OF ANIMALS

their joy by preparing for a swim, for nothing short of a vigorous splash could work off steam. A moment later each emerged from a bathhouse and rushed for Bert's canoe, which was always pressed into service when a dip was in order. Scrambling in, each took a paddle and struck out for dear life. Away shot the feather-weight craft, and when out about a hundred yards from the shore, Bert demanded:

“Didn't I tell you we could do it just as easy as—as——”

“That!” cried Bess, giving a sudden dexterous twist to the canoe, which instantly turned it bottom-side-up, and sent them both splashing and laughing into the water, to swim about like a couple of young dolphins.

CHAPTER III

THE TROPHY

IT was one week before the contest, and although Bert and Bess had plied their ferrying most faithfully, the necessary sum was still incomplete, and it seemed as though failure must overtake them in spite of all their efforts.

One hot, sultry morning, when thunder-heads loomed ominously in the northwest, and the air upon the land quivered as it rose, they pulled over as usual to the island, and after landing their passengers, rowed to a little cove further up the beach and were welcomed by the cat, which had learned to watch for their coming, and to greet them each day. Pulling the boat well up on the sand, the boy and girl threw themselves

STORIES OF ANIMALS

upon the grass under a splendid elm, for the lawn came almost to the water's edge, and began to pet the cat, which promptly ensconced itself in Bess's lap. But puss must have detected a want of warmth in her attentions that morning, and seemed to be trying to supply the lack herself by being more gracious than usual, as she rubbed and warbled and purred like a galvanic battery.

“Yes, pussy, you are just as dear as ever you can be,” said Bess, “but I am cross and horrid to-day, and all because I can't have something that I want very much indeed, and do something that I want to do just dreadful,” and unconsciously Bess lifted the cat up by its fore legs and gave it a vigorous shake, which puss instantly resented by giving a surprised squawl and bounding out of her arms. The squawl and the spring brought the girl back to her senses; with a voice filled with contrition she

STORIES OF ANIMALS

bounded up and ran after the fleeing cat, calling as she ran: "Oh, pussy; dear, dear pussy, I did not mean to be cross to you. Please come back. Poor kitty!"

But Madam Pussy's dignity had been grievously outraged, and she meant to leave no doubt of the fact. So on she tore with Bess in hot pursuit, scrambling under the thick foliage, and calling imploringly, until the next thing she knew she had plunged headlong into a pair of very substantial arms.

"My goodness! Oh, I *beg* your pardon! I didn't see you!" she gasped.

"So I conclude," answered the owner of the arms, at the same time re-establishing the young lady's equilibrium, and then stepping back to smile an odd, sad smile at her. Bert had by this time overtaken her, and promptly doffing his hat said:

"We frightened the cat and were trying to get her to come back. She is such a

STORIES OF ANIMALS

beauty, and meets us every day. We think that she belongs to Billy Dixon, although we have never seen her at the dock. Too many people there, I dare say; she seems to be an exclusive sort of lady. She is a beauty, isn't she, sir?" for the cat had now settled herself contentedly upon a rustic seat nearby, and Bess was making her peace with her.

Bess now looked up to ask: "Have you ever seen her before?" The expression upon her face was Bess's own, for she was as wanting in self-consciousness as any little child, and took the world kindly.

The gentleman before her replied: "Yes, I have seen her before. She is a very handsome cat."

"We think she is the handsomest we have ever seen, and so intelligent. She comes to meet us every day; we have grown so fond of her and she of us," and forthwith Bess launched into a eulogy upon the cat.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

From time to time the gentleman let fall a question, or made a leading remark, until before the young people knew how it had happened, they were seated beside him upon the rustic seat, telling him all about their ferrying, why they were doing it, also the state of the exchequer, while puss luxuriated in Bess's lap, and their companion almost drank in their words, and looked at them as a starving man looks at a feast which is just beyond his reach.

"Do you come over here often?" questioned Bess, looking up into her new friend's eyes.

"Yes, very often. It is a pretty place to visit, don't you think so?"

"Just lovely! I don't wonder that people come every day. Bert and I never suspected how lovely it was until we started our ferry, but now we find something new nearly every time we come. Of course, we never go up to the other end of

STORIES OF ANIMALS

the island, although we're just dying to, for we know pretty well what sort of a reception we'd meet with at Money-bags' Castle." Bess did not notice the slight start the man gave when she made use of the uncomplimentary name by which half the young people of Totem Harbor spoke of the owner of the island.

"No," asserted Bert, "we take good care to keep on the east side of the boundary wire, although we often row clear around the island in the hope of catching a glimpse of old Money-bags Clarke. He must be a great old codger to stay stived up there all the time, and never have any visitors or do a thing with his money."

"How do you know that he does not do 'a thing' with it?"

"Oh, everybody knows that! Why, only last summer the people over at the shore were getting up a benefit for a family that was just as poor as poor could be; father

STORIES OF ANIMALS

had been in the New Haven Hospital for months and months, and there were kids enough for half a dozen families. The mother did washing till she got sick, too, and they had an awful time. Some of the people thought that Mr. Clarke ought to help because he had such a lot of money and nobody to think of, so two or three of them came over here to see him, and what do you suppose he did? Just let 'em talk and talk until he'd found out all about it, and they thought he was so interested that they'd get a pile, and then said that he never attended functions of that sort and guessed he didn't want any tickets. Now what do you think of *that* for an old skinflint with piles of cash?" Bert wagged his head, and then snatched off the cap he wore to shake it viciously, as though that would have been his method of dealing with the parsimonious Clarke.

"Yes," broke in Bess, "and wasn't it

STORIES OF ANIMALS

funny? The very next day a check came to the people at the hotel for a hundred dollars, and a note to say that it came from an unknown friend in New Haven who had learned of the benefit to be given. It was signed with the name of the bank cashier, and no one was ever able to find out whether he really sent it,—I mean drew it,—or whether he did it for someone else. Mamma said that she had a pretty shrewd idea where it came from, and when some of the ladies begged her to tell she just nodded over toward this island. You ought to have heard them laugh at the idea, for one of them had been with the party that called upon Mr. Clarke. But they couldn't change mamma's opinion, and, well—it's nice to think that it *may* have been him, isn't it? I hate to think unkind things of people, don't you? It makes one feel so much more comfortable to think nice ones."

"One must judge a man by his deeds, I

STORIES OF ANIMALS

presume, and you know that a very famous person once said: 'A man's evil deeds live after him, but his good deeds are often interred with his bones'; so perhaps that may be the case in this instance," and the gentleman looked at Bess searchingly.

"I don't believe it!" was the girl's champion-like, if rather rude contradiction, for she hated injustice of any kind, and all her sense of right and wrong, which was keen, arose to defend anyone, or anything, wrongly suspected and unjustly accused. "If the good things which people do are forgotten, how is it we happen to have such splendid biographies of people and the generous things they have done? If Mr. Clarke is a crusty old codger who doesn't want to see people, or be bothered by them, maybe he has some reason for it, although it *is* pretty hard to understand how a man can have such loads and loads of money and not be perfectly crazy to do things for other people.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

Why, he couldn't turn around without finding something he could do to make other people happy, if he only had his eyes wide enough open to see it. My goodness! don't I wish mamma and I were rich enough to do the things we would like to do. I don't care a cent for money just to stack it up, do you?" and she turned her radiant face toward the man. "But we can't do one-tenth of the things we want to because all we have that little mother of mine has to earn by scribbling. Of course, when we are down here she rests and has a lovely time with us,—Bert and me,—but when we go back to New York she just hustles all winter, I can tell you," and off galloped Bess upon her hobby, for when "mother" came uppermost in her thoughts, and that was pretty often, no parent ever needed a warmer eulogizer. Her new friend listened with flattering interest, drawing the girl on to talk more and more freely, and occasion-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

ally appealing to the boy's opinion, glean-
ing in that one hour more information and
more true happiness than had fallen to his
share in many a long day. There is no tell-
ing how long Bess would have chatted on,
had not an interruption come from the
mainland.

"My goodness! There goes the twelve
o'clock whistle," she cried, as a prolonged
tooting from the shore announced noon.
"What under the sun will mother think has
become of us, Bert?" and she jumped to her
feet with a look of dismay. "Where *has* this
morning gone to?"

"By crackie, I don't know. Are you go-
ing over to the mainland yet, sir? We'd be
awfully glad to row you across."

"I had not thought of going just yet, but
since you are good enough to ask me, I be-
lieve I will go now," and he rose from his
seat to follow them down to the boat, the
cat trotted familiarly beside him and occa-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

sionally rubbing against his legs. Bess noticed the act instantly, and said:

“Puss has accepted you as a friend, too. Mother says that it is a good sign when animals and children like people; she says that she always trusts such people.”

“Then I may win her friendship some day, I hope, as I trust I have won her daughter’s and her daughter’s friend’s,” said their companion, seating himself in the boat. Bess colored, for she had not stopped to weigh her words, and realized after they were spoken that they had been a trifle personal. Then came the usual farewell to the cat, in which their friend joined, and the boat sped toward the mainland. When they reached the landing their passenger offered Bert a fifty-cent piece, saying:

“My contribution toward the wheel.”

“Oh, no! We couldn’t possibly take it! Why, we *asked* you to come.”

“That makes no difference, I have been

STORIES OF ANIMALS

a passenger," and he proffered the money again.

"No! no! We will *not* take it," broke in Bess. "We invited you to row with us because we liked you, and had such a nice little visit with you over on the island, but it would just *spoil* it to take money for bringing you home. We can't, no we can't!" and a light came into the girl's eyes which showed a determined spirit hard to conquer, once she had made up her mind to a certain line of conduct.

"Very well, little comrades; I accept your courtesy in the kindly spirit in which it is offered, but the next time you must let me pay my debts. So let us shake hands and part as old friends, for I do not mean to lose sight of you, if I can help it." His hand was extended first to Bess, who promptly put her slender brown paw in the great strong one, and wondered why it was held so long and tenderly, for the man placed his

STORIES OF ANIMALS

other caressingly over hers, and seemed loath to release it. "Good-by, young man. I hope to know your father soon, for he must be a man worth cultivating. Good-by."

"Somehow I don't feel half so glum over the wheel question as I did," said Bess, as she and Bert walked toward her home after having made the boat fast. "I guess it's because we've had that chat with Mr. ——. My goodness, Bert! we don't even know his name," and Bess stopped stock still in the road.

"Well, he knows *ours*, all right enough," cried Bert with a comical laugh, "and don't you forget it. And he knows a heap more besides. Bess, we've been 'done' and never suspected it, but I guess it won't kill us."

"Well, I don't care one cent if we have, He was a *gentleman*, anyway, and if it amused him to talk with us for an hour, I'm sure he's welcome to the pleasure. I like

STORIES OF ANIMALS

him, and hope we'll see him again," and Bess gave her head a determined little wag.

Two more days of the week passed, and although Bert and Bess had redoubled their efforts, the fund did not grow with the rapidity they had hoped it would. On Wednesday afternoon neither was sanguine as they sat upon one of the lawn seats in Mr. Steward's grounds; one growling at perverse fate, the other trying to look cheerful under difficulties. An express wagon passed along the road, and on it was a bicycle, carefully cased. As wheels were uppermost in their minds at that moment, it was no wonder that both were quick to notice it.

"Oh, look there! Isn't that a dandy wheel?" cried Bert, pointing to the wagon.

Bess jumped to her feet, stooped suddenly, caught up two or three clover leaves which were growing in the grass at her feet and said excitedly, "If I'm lucky there'll

STORIES OF ANIMALS

be a four-leafed clover in this bunch, and I'll wish that when I get my wheel it will be just as handsome as that beauty. And, Bert! Bert! there *is* a four-leafed one. Look! look! And—the wagon has stopped at our house, they are leaving the wheel there!" The next second two wildly excited young people were racing along the road toward Bess's cottage, gesticulating, and screaming to Mrs. Clifton, who was just signing the expressman's receipt for the case left at her door.

Breathless they reached the piazza, breathless they read the address upon the tag attached to the bicycle case: "Miss Bess Clifton, Ivy Cliff Cottage, Totem Harbor, Conn.," still breathless they began taking apart the crating and removing the handsome wheel, piece by piece. Hardly a word was spoken by either during the process, but the rapidity with which that wheel was removed from its protecting wrappings, the

STORIES OF ANIMALS

skill with which each part was adjusted, gingerly touched, as though it might prove a fairy wheel and vanish before their eyes, was a marvel to Mrs. Clifton, who stood watching the progress. "It's the very newest model ladies' Columbia! It's a chainless, right up to date! Say, Bess, there are no flies on that wheel," announced Bert, as piece after piece was put in place, and at last the wheel stood complete before their admiring, eager eyes.

"It's even the very *color* I wished for, a perfect garnet! It's one of the most expensive wheels made! Why, Bert, that wheel must have cost a hundred dollars. I never in this world could have bought one like it, if we had rowed back and forth to the island from now till Christmas. And oh, Mudger, Mudger, who *do* you think could have sent it to me?" Without more ado, Bess flung her arms about her mother's neck and whirled her about in a delirium of joy,

STORIES OF ANIMALS

while Bert threw his hat into the air and shouted at the top of his lungs:

“Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! for the chap or the chapess who did it, whoever he or she may be! Now you can go in for your trophy.”

CHAPTER IV

THE CATASTROPHE

THE 7th of August, the day anticipated with fear and trembling by those entered for the various games and contests which would take place in the afternoon, and with joy by all the young people at the hotels and cottages, had arrived, and the wildest excitement prevailed. Two o'clock was the hour set for the first contest, and long before the clock struck that hour carriages began to arrive and deposit their burdens at the piazza of the big hotel in the grounds of which, and upon whose beach, the games were to take place. Aside from the regular programme arranged there would be various contests for the older men and maids, but our interest centers wholly

STORIES OF ANIMALS

in the games for the young people; these consisted of four for the boys under fifteen and four for the girls of the same ages.

Promptly at the stroke of two the judges appeared and began to get their charges in order. First on the programme came a rowing contest for the boys between twelve and fifteen, and ten boats were entered. Bert's *Nautilus* was gotten up in style, for a tiny silken flag, which Bess had made for him, waved at the bow, and the brass work had been polished until it rivaled the sunlight. The signal was given and the boats lined up. A breathless pause ensued while the judges' eyes rested critically upon each, lest by some partiality one boat should be an inch in advance of another. But the line was at length pronounced entirely satisfactory, and bang, went a pistol shot. At the same instant each oar dropped into the water as if by magic. Ten boys bent to the long, sweeping strokes which would carry

STORIES OF ANIMALS

them out to the half-mile stake-boat, around it, and back to the goal, before the anxiously watching crowd of ladies and gentlemen upon the pier, board walk, and beach would have time to draw a dozen long breaths. Well did Bert's daily trips to and from the island stand him in stead now, for during those weeks of struggle for Bess he had unconsciously been putting in some solid training for himself, and long before the home stake was reached cries went up: "Bert! Bert! Hurrah! What's the matter with Bert? *He's* all right!" and in rushed the victorious *Nautilus*, to be greeted with wild acclamations.

Next in order came the tennis contest for the girls. This was to be played by two girls who, during the previous weeks, had played a tournament, and as the champions of that had now been chosen to play three games as a final test of their prowess. A general move was made toward the tennis

STORIES OF ANIMALS

courts, where Isabel Arnold and Florence Bates were already in their places. Back and forth, up and down flashed the rackets, and thither and yonder skipped the girls after the two elusive balls. Tally-keepers called out the score to the interested spectators and yet more interested contestants. "Four to six in favor of Miss Bates," was the first score called, and then came a rest. The next game was a tie. The final game was a close one, and hotly contested, but was deservedly won by Miss Arnold, the score being five to six..

"All to the beach for the hundred-yard swimming contest!" called out the master of ceremonies, and a general scramble toward the beach took place. Five boys were entered for this, and presently came running over the sand from their bathhouses, five as fine-looking laddies as one could wish to see. The start was to be made from the beach, and at the signal five bathing tights

STORIES OF ANIMALS

splashed into the Sound, and five pairs of vigorous young arms struck out for a row-boat anchored one hundred yards from shore.

“Four wins! Four wins!” cried enthusiastic voices on shore.

“No! no! It’s three. It’s three!”

And “Three” it was, for Bert’s number “Four” was outstripped by long-armed, splendidly set up Park Wilson, Bert’s chum and crony.

“Good for you! Fine old man!” and Bert’s arm splashed over his friend’s back by way of congratulation.

While the swimmers were receiving all manners of praises, six girls were preparing for a “tail-end” canoe race, which had been decided upon almost at the last moment, and for which Bess was entered. They now appeared arrayed in their pretty bathing suits, for such crafts as these have been known to turn balky and land their occu-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

pants in the water. Six canoes danced upon the little waves of the bay, and six laughing, happy girls scrambled into them. Those of you who have ever witnessed a "tail-end" race need not be told anything about the "stunts" which these six canoes executed, or the shouts of laughter which greeted each new antic. Had they been wild western broncos they could hardly have created greater diversion, and when Bess managed to guide her troublesome craft safely to the goal and induce it with many pats and persuasions to round the buoy without rearing bodily out of the water, the watchers felt that she well deserved the pretty gold stick-pin in the shape of a canoe which would fall to her share as the winner.

A hundred-yard dash over the smooth beach was next in order for the laddies, and more than a dozen boys were entered for the race. Decked in their bathing tights, twenty-four or more bare legs went twin-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

bling over the sand when a pistol shot banged "Go!" The race was won by a lad from one of the cottages, and everybody rejoiced thereat. He had spent hours training for the contest, and had nearly run all the flesh from his bones in his eagerness to win the prize—a volume of Seton-Thompson's "Lives of the Hunted."

Three contests now remained; the diving for the boys, the bicycle race for the girls, and, to conclude, the pony-cart parade, which gave an opportunity for the very little people to carry off a prize.

To Bess nothing could compare with the bicycle race, for nearly every moment since her own beauty had arrived she had spent either in admiring it, conjecturing whence it had come, or in riding, until her mother declared that she would wear herself out before she had a chance to race in earnest. Try as she would, nothing could be learned of the sender of this remarkable wheel, and

STORIES OF ANIMALS

more than one brain was still puzzling over the mystery when Bess appeared to take her place in the line with six other girls. Eyes sparkling with excitement, cheeks flushed, she stood ready to mount. She was a bonny sight decked in her pretty red-and-white cotton cheviot sailor suit, with its white braid trimmings, every stitch of which she had made herself, for she was a skillful little needle-woman, who had taken pride in making this gown for the festive occasion all herself. Truly, her mother would have been more than human had her eyes not sparkled with sympathy, and her cheeks burned with excitement, for the breath of one was as that of the other.

The signal was given, and away sped the wheels. The course lay down the long hotel driveway, out upon the road to a straight, smooth path which ran to the distant cottages, then turned and made its way back to the hotel piazza; a distance over all of

STORIES OF ANIMALS

very nearly a mile. Away went the girls, cheered by the people, who by this time were ready to cheer for anything. On, out of sight under the trees, to reappear again upon the distant path, and whiz along, with first one and then another in the lead. It was a hot contest, and more than once it looked as though that new wheel was destined to be defeated. But Bess knew what she was about, and how to measure her own power. Just as the last turn was made, Bert, who had been watching proceedings with the keenest interest, and a very self-satisfied smile, gave a wild whoop, for whiz!—away shot Bess from the others, pedaling for honor, her goal, and dear life, to come in fully ten yards in advance of the second wheel. She almost tumbled into Bert's arms, for he made a wild grab at her and nearly knocked rider, wheel, and all into a heap, in his eagerness to be the first to congratulate the winner. Had not a pair of

STORIES OF ANIMALS

firm, steady arms, come unexpectedly to the enthusiastic young man's rescue, an ignominious smash-up would have been the grand finale of that bicycle race; for the wheels behind paused not in the order of their coming, but came with a rush.

"*Eile mit Weile!*" said a deep voice, and Bess and Bert looked up to find themselves in the arms of their friend of the island, who smiled as he added: "Well done, little girl! You won that race in magnificent style. No one can be prouder than I am to have seen you do it."

"Oh, it was the *wheel!* it really *was* the wheel! Did you ever see such a splendid one?" panted Bess. "I believe I would almost be willing to give it up, though, right now, if I could *only* find out who sent it to me; I'm so ready to fly all to pieces with gratitude to them for doing it."

"‘Take the goods the gods provide,’ is a wise old saw, my dear. But now let me

STORIES OF ANIMALS

have the honor of escorting you to the judge's stand for your well-earned prize." Before she well knew what had happened, Bess was walking off with her elderly friend, her arm tucked confidently within his, and Bert prancing along behind, now and again tossing his cap in the air by way of giving vent to his pent-up feelings. Up to the judge marched Bess, to receive from that kindly man as pretty a chain bracelet as ever gladdened feminine heart. She gave a little gasp as it was slipped upon her arm, the tiny padlock snapped, and the key placed in her hand. Then turning to her new friend and Bert, cried:

"Oh, come with me quick to mamma, please, for I want her to see that every single wish I've had this whole summer is gratified. I wanted so much to have a bracelet like this, and a wheel, and now if I could only know who sent me *that*, and be able to tell her, I wouldn't have a single

STORIES OF ANIMALS

thing left in the world to wish for. Please come, Mr. ——?" and she stopped questioningly.

"Mr. Marion," was the name supplied with an odd smile.

"Come, Bert, I need you, too," she said, so brimming over with happiness that she would have included the entire assembly in her rapture.

They made their way to where Mrs. Clifton was surrounded by Bert's family, for these older people were equal sharers in the joys of their young folk.

Pleasant courtesies were interchanged, Mr. Marion was presented, and the bracelet admired. But then came the announcement for the diving contest, and Bert fled to prepare for it, while the others made their way to the long pier.

Each of the twelve boys was to dive three times, and many were experts. One after another sprung off the pier's end, to dis-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

appear beneath the blue water. Bert was among the last, but satisfied nods were exchanged when that stalwart young figure, with skin as white and dimpled as any girl's, but firm as alabaster, poised itself upon the pier's end, and a second later sprung out to cut through the water clean as a knife blade, and come up a hundred feet from where it had vanished.

Wild were the acclamations at this feat, for, with one exception, the other boys had come up spluttering like young grampuses. Fast and furious bobbed the laddies in and out of the water, but from the first the championship was a foregone conclusion, and even the other boys were wild in their praises of Bert and his skill. Already winner of a fine kodak, the prize given for the best oarsman, he now proudly displayed to his friends a handsome little model of the "Columbia," which, at the expense of much time, trouble, and infinite patience, had

STORIES OF ANIMALS

been made during the previous winter by one of the guests at the hotel.

Last came the children's pony-cart contest; a parade in which each little lassie who was the fortunate owner of a pony and cart paraded before the admiring audience to display her skill in floral decorations, and quaint and pretty enough they were, too.

Now why is it that dear old Mother Nature, usually so gracious to her children, is apt to turn churlish when they grow particularly gay and festive? So absorbed had the guests become that only a very few of them noted the ominous thunder-heads looming up in the northwest, and not until a startling thunderclap burst almost over their heads did they realize that a violent tempest was upon them. Then came the usual scramble for protection, and before one could have thought it possible, the hundreds of laughing, merry people who had dotted the hotel lawn and beach had dis-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

appeared as if by magic, to seek shelter wherever shelter offered.

It so happened that Mr. and Mrs. Steward, Mrs. Clifton, and one or two friends were near the Steward cottage, and into it all hurried.

Unless one has witnessed such, it is difficult to realize the sudden change which can take place upon the water. An hour before nothing could have been more peaceful than that exquisite expanse of blue bay, which was now raging and tossing like a wild thing. The wind was blowing a furious gale from the southeast, dashing thither and yonder the boats anchored just off shore, while flashes of lightning and peals of thunder caused the timid to start and the brave to marvel.

“I say, Bess,” exclaimed Bert when, the worst of the storm passed, they stood watching it from the piazza, and a wild wave caused his boat to drag fiercely at the

STORIES OF ANIMALS

painter; "it's a lucky thing that I didn't get so rattled over winning that I forgot to make the *Nautilus* tight fast. I bet a dollar there'll be some boats adrift before this squall is over."

"Of course; there always will be somebody who forgot until it was too late. And—Bert! Bert! Look over there! That's a boat! See it bob up and down? And there's something in it, too! What can it be? Quick, come down to the rocks, where we can see better." Catching up her heavy golf cape she flung it over her shoulders, dragged the hood over her head, and rushed down the steps, Bert scrambling into his mackintosh to tear after her.

"Children! Children! Where are you going?" called Mrs. Steward in dismay, while Mr. Steward rushed after the madcaps. The storm was rapidly abating, but still the waves dashed furiously upon the rocks and beach. On tore the boy and girl,

STORIES OF ANIMALS

and on came the drifting boat—swaying, rolling, dashing, while high and shrill over the tumult of the storm arose the pitiful wails of a distressed cat, yowling and howling as nothing upon this earth but a distressed cat can.

“ Bert! Bert! There is a cat adrift in that boat! And, Bert, oh! Bert, it is Kitty Island!” the name they had given to the island cat.

“ What a catastrophe!” cried a voice at their elbows, and there stood Mr. Steward. “ What in this world are you insane children going to do?” he demanded; for Bess had rushed down to the landing, with Bert close upon her heels, and both began to haul for dear life at the pulley line to which the *Nautilus* was made fast.

“ Why, we’ve got to save the cat, of course,” cried Bess, as she tugged at the wind-tossed rope, her hair flying, and her cape flapping wildly about her.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Sure!” echoed Bert. “Let Kitty Island drown out there! Not if we know it! Pull, Bess. There; steady now! Take care where you step. Sit there and pull stroke. All right? Now for it!” and quicker than it would have taken a wholesome pulse to beat, the light steel craft, with its air-tight compartments at bow and stern, went bounding over the waves, rowed as it had never been rowed before, for it would have been hard to tell which of her two friends pulling so valiantly to her rescue loved the beautiful cat the better.

“Well I’ll be hanged!” was all the placid Mr. Steward said as the boat sped toward the derelict, and he returned to the cottage to reassure the feminine portion of his household. “But I don’t know that I blame them,” he added, when he had succeeded in calming their fears. “Young folks will be young folks, and spunk won’t hurt them.”

CHAPTER V

“The evening beam that smiles the cloud away,
And tints to-morrow with prophetic ray.”

ON came the tossing boat, and poor puss seemed to realize that friends and help were near, for she punctuated her yowls with the welcoming mew which Bert and Bess had learned to understand as their greeting to the island, and, digging her claws into the gunwale, stretched as far as possible toward her rescuers as their boat drew nearer and nearer. With the spray dashing around them and their hair blowing about their faces, the boy and girl did battle with the waves, meanwhile calling reassuringly to the cat. Gradually the pitiful wails ceased, and pussy's accustomed dignity returned while she waited with feline

STORIES OF ANIMALS

patience for those whom she had grown to love and trust. Yet now and again she cast a wild eye upon the tumult of water all about her, and if ever cat breathed a sigh of relief, this one did as Bert's strong arms grasped the gunwale of the drifting boat and held on to it for dear life—and the cat. With one final yowl Kitty Island gave a mighty bound and landed in Bess's lap, crouching down, trembling from fright, yet fully confident of protection.

Bess could not let go of her oars, but her tongue was not engaged, and if ever tongue supplied the lack of other members, Bess's did in this instance, and pussy evidently felt that nothing was lacking.

At last Bert succeeded in making fast the errant rowboat, and was so engaged with that difficult task, and Bess so occupied with holding the *Nautilus* steady and comforting the cat, that neither noticed how near the island the wind and tide had car-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

ried them. The wind had now hauled in to the northwest, and was conducting itself less like a wild West Indian hurricane. At last the boat was secure, and the cat calmed down. Then Bert again took up his oars and his bearings.

“Crackie, Bess, we’re almost on the island!” he cried.

“True as you live! The tide has carried us way off shore, and maybe we won’t have a fine old pull getting home in the teeth of this wind and tide.” Bess gave her head a wise shake, for during the past weeks both she and Bert had had reason to learn a thing or two about winds and tides.

“Let’s row right to the island, though, and land Kitty safe and sound; it will be a pull anyway, so it might as well be a good one and done with it,” was Bert’s philosophical retort.

“Yes, do; I’m not very tired, and we can rest when we get there. Besides, your

STORIES OF ANIMALS

father has been watching us with his glass, for I can see him on the piazza this minute," she said, as she peered over the water.

"By George! I wish I could see as you do," was Bert's admiring exclamation. "Blessed if I can see even the piazza. How *can* you see dad?"

"Right through my eyes, to be sure," was the laughing reply, as she flashed a glance over her shoulder from the dark eyes which were a constant puzzle to all who saw them, for they were never twice the same color, and kept her friends guessing.

"Well, now,—all together!" shouted Bert, and down went the two pairs of oars as though one hand had dropped them into the water. "We'll get Kitty Island back to Billy Dixon as fast as ever we can, poor little chap. I dare say he's in a state of mind about her if he's missed her."

Then the low-hanging clouds drew off

STORIES OF ANIMALS

toward the east, and the sun began to peep from below them before it bid the world a cheerful "good-night," and dropped behind the western hills. The island stood out in all the beauty of its greens and browns, with every object upon it intensified by the glorious light. As their boat drew near they saw that another one was about to put off from the island, rowed by Mr. Dixon, while in the stern, to their boundless surprise, sat Mr. Marion. How he had come there when barely two hours before they had seen him and spoken to him at the fête, although, now that they came to think of it, he had suddenly and completely disappeared, they could not understand. However, there he was, talking excitedly to Mr. Dixon, and the words which they overheard as they drew nearer and nearer, puzzled them more than ever.

"Yes! yes! I am convinced that she was in that boat. I am confident of it, for I left

STORIES OF ANIMALS

her asleep beneath the stern seat. Didn't you see her?"

"No, sir; I didn't, sir. But she's so often with you in the boat that I've got not to mind. But don't worry, sir. We'll find her right enough. Cats have nine lives, you know, sir."

Until now the men had been too occupied and also troubled with their own concerns to notice the boat drawing near, but directly it touched the landing-stage puss gave a joyous "Mew-ow-ow!" and bounded from Bess's lap straight to Mr. Marion. Bess looked dumfounded, nor was her astonishment lessened when, with a little cry, Mr. Marion took the cat into his arms, and said in a voice that trembled with emotion:

"*Mein Kameradchen! Oh, mein Kameradchen!* Have they brought you safely back to me?" then, with the cat still in his arms, he stepped from the boat and turning to the boy and girl said: "Come with me,

STORIES OF ANIMALS

my little friends; there is much I would say to you, and you have both won the right to hear it."

With wonder clearly depicted upon each face, Bert and Bess scrambled out of their boat, tossed the painter to Mr. Dixon, and followed their friend without one word, as, with rapid, nervous strides, he led the way along the path from the dock straight to the walk which led to the further end of the island. He still held the cat in his arms, and talked to her as though she were a child, which could understand every word he spoke. Bert and Bess hurried after him as though in a strange sort of dream. Taking a key from his vest pocket, Mr. Marion unlocked the high gate in the fence which divided the island, and passed within the sacred precincts of "Money-bags' Castle," straight up to the very "castle" itself. When he reached the piazza he dropped upon one of the pretty

STORIES OF 'ANIMALS

porch seats and motioned for Bert and Bess to sit beside him. For a moment not a word was spoken, but at length, with a final caress for the cat, Mr. Marion set her gently upon the piazza, murmuring as he did so: "Thank God that even this slender tie has not been taken from me." Then turning first to one and then the other questioning face beside him, he laid a hand upon each of theirs, saying very, very earnestly:

"'And they wrought greater than they knew.'"

Now, there is a certain high pressure when steam and the feminine tongue *must* have vent, or serious things happen. For fully fifteen minutes Bess had not spoken one word, but had kept curiosity, amazement, surprise, astonishment, and the whole category of trying emotions, tightly corked. Perhaps the truth would not be unduly stretched if I added that a masculine noddle

STORIES OF ANIMALS

was conscious of rather high pressure also. Then the safety-valve began to work:

“Whose is she? Is she yours? Do you live here? Have you *always* lived here? Do you know Mr. Clarke? Were you living here the day we met you at the other end of the island?” were some of the questions which rattled about Mr. Marion’s head like shots from a Gatling gun. He smiled as he asked:

“Shall I try to answer them in order?” Then Bess blushed, as she realized her impetuosity, and Bert broke in:

“Why, you see, sir, we’re all sort of struck endwise with astonishment, for,—well,—we didn’t know that you—that Mr. Clarke—that we—why——” and Bert paused embarrassed.

“Can you spare a little time from your happy young lives to listen to a story which has only sadness in it, but which a lonely man, whom you have taught to love you

STORIES OF ANIMALS

both, and also taught to believe that perhaps this world still holds a little sunlight for him, wishes very much to tell you? It will not take very long, but perhaps we shall feel that we have something in common once it is told." Mr. Marion paused, looked off over the water toward the mainland, and into his eyes came a look which caused both Bert's and Bess's eyes to grow strangely bright. Presently he resumed: "Twenty years ago this island was *my* paradise, for thither I came with my bride, and here we spent the long, beautiful summer months. When October had painted the foliage in gorgeous coloring we went far away over the sea, and wandered about foreign lands, seeing, marveling, and enjoying as we can do but once in a lifetime. A year slipped by before we knew where it had gone. Then we made our way up to Dresden, and there our little Heartsease came to live with us. We thought we had been happy

STORIES OF ANIMALS

before, but we had not known what happiness meant. Somehow, we grew to love that quaint old city, and lingered on year after year, until our little German-born daughter was just your age, my dear," and Mr. Marion laid his hand upon Bess's head with a wonderfully tender gesture. "Then we thought it high time that we should visit her fatherland, and turned our faces toward home. From photographs sent to us from time to time, we knew of every change made here, and Heartsease was no stranger to her father's old home, and longed to be in it. Some time before the date set for our return to America, a beautiful kitten had been given to Heartsease, and they were almost inseparable, for she loved cats even as you do. She had named it *Kameradchen*,—little comrade—and comrades they truly were. Well, we started upon our homeward voyage, filled with hopes and joys too sweet to name; too sweet for this world, I

STORIES OF ANIMALS

fear, for they were destined never to be realized. You will hardly remember the great ship which went to the bottom of the sea that fatal year, carrying with her nearly every soul on board, and desolation into many a home. Fog, fog, fog! May I never again witness such a sight!" and a shudder passed over him.

"We do; oh, we *do* remember it! It was the ——," cried Bert, but Bess only clasped her hands tightly together and looked into Mr. Marion's face. As though the look recalled him, he continued:

"It would have been better had the waves claimed me also, but I was dragged from them unconscious, but clinging to me with the strength of despair was *Kameradchen*. She had been in Heartsease' arms as I held her in my own, hoping for rescue. My wife had been carried from the ship by the first officer, but neither was saved. I do not know when Heartsease slipped from

STORIES OF ANIMALS

me,—I knew nothing more until I opened my eyes in the lifeboat and *Kameradchen* was mewling piteously on my bosom. Shall I tell you any more? Need I? *Kameradchen* is all that is left to me; all that is left of the happy life which made my own a joy from morning until night. When I first saw you with her I started and almost held my breath, for you are very, very like my little Heartsease. Like her as she was when the sea took her from me; she would be seventeen now. She and her mother are not parted, thank God. I watched you that day from behind the trees. Saw the marine battle, overheard your controversy, and wondered what the outcome would prove. Later I learned, and also discovered who you were——” but here Bess rose to her feet and cried:

“And we never suspected! You are Mr. Marion *Clarke*! And——” She paused and gasped as she recalled how freely they

STORIES OF ANIMALS

had discussed and criticised that gentleman upon that eventful day. "And, oh! I said such dreadful, dreadful things about you! I was so rude; so unkind! Oh, I *am* so sorry; so terribly sorry, for I never knew, I never knew! Dear, dear little Heartsease!" and warm-hearted, impulsive Bess, without more ado, dropped upon her knees and resting her clasped hands upon her friend's knees, sobbed as though her heart would break. Bert's eyes were full, but he would have died rather than let others suspect it, and stood with his head turned from them, saying in a voice which would quiver in spite of him: "I don't see how you *can* like us. It was no end mean of us. Just downright beastly. But you know that we never suspected: we really didn't, yet,—oh, hang it, that doesn't make it a bit better, does it?" and Bert confessed their shortcomings manfully.

Mr. Clarke bent tenderly over the re-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

morseful little figure before him, gently smoothing back the tangled locks, and saying kindly:

“Don’t sob so bitterly, my little girl. I was able to look deeper into the character behind the impulsive tongue than you guessed, and also behind the one underneath these blue eyes,” and he laid his hand upon Bert’s arm.

“I beg your pardon, sir! I honestly do,” cried Bert, extending his hand. It was warmly grasped as Mr. Clarke replied:

“Perhaps I needed waking up, and if I have won two such friends at the expense of a little plain speaking, I certainly am the gainer. Come, little lassie; the shower is passed; the tempest is over; the clouds are dispersing, and the sun is giving us promise of a happy to-morrow,” and he raised Bess gently to her feet.

Sunshine and shower were a part of Bess’s nature, although many clouds were

STORIES OF ANIMALS

needed to bring the shower. As she rose to her feet she looked at her friend with brimming eyes, even though her lips were smiling.

Extending her hand, she said simply: "Will you please try to forgive me? I did not mean to wound you, and you have been so kind to me; so kind, and——" Then a new light sprung into her eyes, her hands were again clasped and a step taken toward him as she asked: "Did *you* send it?"

Breathlessly, eagerly, she awaited the reply. With an odd smile curving his lips Mr. Clarke took both the little hands in his own, as he asked: "Did I follow out the details supplied?"

This was too much! Two pairs of arms were clasped about him; two pairs of eager eyes looked into his; and two pairs of lips formed questions faster than ever lips formed them before. Did he like it? Did it open a new world to this lonely, unhappy man?

STORIES OF ANIMALS

Off over the water a gorgeous rainbow had formed, bridging from the mainland to one far-distant island. Standing upon the piazza of this home, which would no longer lack the sound of joyous young voices, was a middle-aged man. On one side of him stood a happy-faced girl with her arm about his waist, while his arm encircled hers. Upon his other side stood a sturdy, frank-faced lad, his arm across his kind friend's shoulder, while that friend's in turn rested upon the broad, strong ones which had so lately put forth their strength to rescue something very precious; something which, although to the world but a cat, was to the man all that remained as a tie between his present loneliness and an ideal past.

A happy light shone in his eyes as he quoted Byron's beautiful lines:

“The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,
And tints to-morrow with prophetic light!”

TED AND HIS "SER-
GEANT"

TED AND HIS "SER- GEANT"

CHAPTER I

THE SERGEANT IS INTRODUCED

"**M**AMMA, are you going out this horrid day?" asked a little girl who stood with her face pressed close to a window pane, upon the outer side of which the rain-drops were beating and forming tiny rivulets which made their way to the ledge below, there to form into little icy hummocks. It was, indeed, a "horrid day," of the sort to make one feel far more inclined to take one's seat in a low chair before a cheerful open fire, to do a bit of sewing, or read an interesting book, than to

STORIES OF ANIMALS

wrap one's self in storm clothing and start out into the icy streets.

"I think I must, dear. Mrs. Burd will be keenly disappointed if I fail her; and you know she has so little to make her happy."

"I know it, mamma; but it is such a dreadful day, and so terribly icy that I am afraid you will fall. Just see the sidewalks, and look at the trees in the Park; they are all coated over with ice."

"No, indeed, I'll not fall. See how rough my overshoes are on the bottom, and my mackintosh will keep me perfectly dry. So, good-by, little treasure," and Mrs. Heath stooped to kiss the pretty upturned face.

"Good-by till luncheon, big 'treasure,'" and the little girl clasped her arms tightly about her mother's neck, after which she went to the window of the apartment to wave a "good-by" when her mother should

STORIES OF ANIMALS

cross to the opposite side of the street, as Ruth knew she would.

A few moments later the sweet-faced mother looked up to the window to smile a farewell and to throw a kiss in return for the one thrown by the little girl, and started briskly down the icy street.

It *was* a cheerless enough morning; "horrid" scarcely expressed it, for the cold was of the penetrating sort that seemed to chill one's very marrow; and as the rain fell, it formed an icy coating upon everything. New York under such conditions is *not* a pleasant place; and people, huddled in their wrappings, slipped and slid along, expecting each instant to measure their lengths upon the glassy sidewalks. As Mrs. Heath reached the avenue from the quiet side street in which she dwelt, the officer upon the corner came to assist her across, for cable cars and vehicles of all sorts were clanging and rattling by; the

STORIES OF ANIMALS

gripmen striving to control their cars, which slipped and slid along the ice-coated rails, and the drivers of the vehicles either saving and helping the poor struggling beasts which drew them, or else cruelly lashing them, as the temperament of the individual prompted.

“It’s a bad mornin’, it is, ma’am, and hard thrauelin’ for man and baste,” said the policeman, as he took Mrs. Heath’s arm to pilot her safely through the maze.

“It is, indeed, Patrick, and cruelly hard for those who are not properly clad and shod. Are your little ones well and snug this cold day?”

“Thanks be, they are; but there’s many that’s not.”

“I’m afraid there are, and I wish I could relieve them,” replied Mrs. Heath.

“It’s many ye’ve relaved alriddy, thin, both man and baste; may the saints bless

STORIES OF ANIMALS

ye," and the officer touched his hat as he turned back.

As he left her, Mrs. Heath caught sight of a small dog which sat shivering at the edge of the sidewalk. The poor little beast was the very picture of misery; he was soaking wet, the water dripping from his shaggy hair, falling in puddles around him. He seemed too frozen and wretched to get out of the way of the people, and sat lifting first one foot, and then the other, as though the intense cold of the icy pavement was almost beyond his endurance. Starved and frozen, he presented a picture which it would seem must appeal to the stoniest of hearts. Quick to sympathize with misery, whether in human being or in brute, Mrs. Heath stopped to speak to the shivering animal, and, as though he instantly recognized a friend, the poor little creature crawled toward her and uttered a pathetic whine. Stooping down she patted the little soaked

STORIES OF ANIMALS

head and was struck by the beauty of the soft eyes which looked at her so intelligently from beneath the shock of hair above them.

“Poor little beastie! Poor little chap! I wish I could take you with me, for certainly you need help, if ever an animal did,” she said, as he crept closer and closer to her. “But I can’t,” she continued, “for they won’t let me keep you in my home, and I don’t know where to send you.” She stood looking at the little helpless beast with an expression almost as wretched as his.

Meanwhile, the policeman had crossed the street, and, turning to glance back, saw what was taking place.

“Faith, an’ aint that jist loik her!” he exclaimed; “there niver was man, woman, choild, nor baste that didn’t foind out the koind heart av her the very minit they clapped their two eyes upon her.”

Crossing back to where Mrs. Heath still stood, with the little beast crouching beside

STORIES OF ANIMALS

her, he said: "Here, come along wid me, ye dhrippin' curmudgeon, and don't be kapin' a lady sthandin' there in the rain to console ye."

"Does he belong to you, Patrick?"

"Indade, an' he does *not*. Oi'd not have the loiks av him, even if Oi must own that he hails from the Ould Counthry."

"Is he an Irish terrier?"

"He is that; an' he may have been a foin wan before he came down on his luck."

"Poor little thing, I wish I could do something for him, but I can't just now. Can you keep him with you until I return? Then, perhaps, I may be able to do something."

"Shure, I can that, if he'll bide; and if he knows which side his bread's buttered, he'll do that same."

"Very well, I shall be back in about two hours." Mrs. Heath started up Columbus Avenue and soon reached the home where

STORIES OF ANIMALS

she spent two hours in reading aloud to a friend into whose life perpetual darkness had come. When she was on her way home, she wondered if Patrick had been able to keep the dog in charge, and on reaching the corner, she found the policeman pacing up and down with the little beast close to his heels.

“Here we are, ma’am, doin’ the bate, ye see,” he said, “and now what in the world will ye be doin’ wid me Sergeant?”

“I shall take him to our apartment and feed and warm him first, and then think of a home for him. What he needs now is a dry coat and a dish of warm milk. Will you come with me, Sergeant?” The dog took a few steps toward her, and then stopped and looked questioningly at the policeman.

“Go along wid the lady, ye young idjit. It’s betther off ye’ll be than iver before in all yer born days.”

STORIES OF ANIMALS

As though this settled the matter, the dog trotted stiffly beside Mrs. Heath, who talked to him encouragingly, and was rewarded by a wag of the stumpy tail. A moment later she reached her apartment, and ushering the "Sergeant" in ahead of her, coaxed him up the two flights of stairs. As she neared the top a voice called :

"Whom are you talking to, mamma? Is someone coming with you?"

"Yes, a police officer whom I picked up in the street because he was half frozen. What do you think of him?"

"Oh! How did you get him? Who is he for? May I keep him?"

Sergeant's story was soon told, and then, as Patrick had said, he began to learn "upon which side his bread was buttered."

As soon as Mrs. Heath had laid aside her wet wraps the maid was summoned, and in a very brief space of time the Sergeant was treated to a warm bath. He submitted with

STORIES OF ANIMALS

a surprisingly good grace, and as soon as he was thoroughly dried gave every possible evidence of delight at his improved condition. A bowl of warm milk completed his happiness, and when the last drop had vanished, he deliberately walked up to his benefactress and, laying his head upon her knee, looked up at her with his eloquent eyes and uttered a low whine.

“ Oh, mamma! he is thanking you, isn't he? ” cried the little girl, as she leaned over to stroke the soft, silky head. It looked very unlike the scraggy, forlorn one that had sneaked into the apartment an hour before, and the apprehensive look which the eyes had then worn had now given place to one of intense love and gratitude.

“ Dear old fellow, you are happier now, aren't you? Well, we will see what can be done to keep you so. But a good rest will be your best medicine now. Run and get the old afghan, darling, and we will make

STORIES OF ANIMALS

him a bed right here on the hearth by the open fire, and let him have a long sleep; I dare say it has been many a day since he has had one," said Mrs. Heath.

Ruth flew to do her mother's bidding, and a few moments later very distinct canine snores testified to the fact that the Sergeant was taking the medicine prescribed for him.

And thus the Sergeant was introduced. His former history was never learned, but his future was destined to be an eventful one. Even in the brief time he remained in the apartment he became Ruth's devoted slave and attached himself to her like a burr. When the weather cleared toward evening, she took her charge out for an airing. At first he seemed strongly disinclined to go, evidently fearing that his hours of peace and prosperity were to be brought to an abrupt end. But much coaxing and kindness at length prevailed, and he followed her down the stairs, occasionally

STORIES OF ANIMALS

stopping to glance back at Mrs. Heath, who stood at the top, as though her voice, which had been first to speak a kind word, was the one most to be relied upon.

But no amount of persuasion could induce him to leave the block, and the agility with which he skipped through the front door the very instant it was opened for him, proved that there had been some grave misgivings in the dog's mind as to whether so blissful a lot was in store for him.

The following day a plain leather collar was bought, and on the nickel plate was engraved the one word, "Sergeant."

It was something astonishing to witness his metamorphosis, for even in the three days which he spent in his new home he completely put off his "hang-dog" street manners, and adapted himself to his new surroundings as though born and bred to them; which, perhaps, he had been.

Feeling sure that serious objections

STORIES OF ANIMALS

would be raised to his presence in the apartment, Mrs. Heath went at once to the landlord to explain matters, and to state that in the course of a day or two she would find the dog another home. With this end^e in view she took him a few days later to the "Shelter" at One Hundred and Second Street and East River, requesting that he be cared for until such time as a good home could be found for him, and there she left him, expecting never again to lay eyes upon the little Irishman from whom she felt it was high time to part, as both she and Ruth were already becoming too warmly attached to him to make parting easy. She little dreamed when and where she was again destined to meet him, or amid what stirring scenes.

CHAPTER II

DISPUTED OWNERSHIP

MANY months had slipped away since the Sergeant had been taken to the "Animal Shelter," and Mrs. Heath and Ruth often wondered how their little *protégé* was getting along in the home which the "Shelter" had found for him soon after they placed him there. After he had been there about three weeks they learned that he had been "adopted" by someone about to leave the city for a home somewhere in New Jersey, but in what part they never learned, and, except as a memory, the Sergeant passed out of their lives. But not out of ours, for we next find him figuring as a very plump "apple of discord."

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“He is Ted’s, too! How darst you say he aint?”

“I *darst*, and he *aint* neither. He belongs to Dick Sayre, for he told me he did when I was down here last year.”

“I don’t care a cent what he told you last year. He’s Ted’s *now*, and that’s straight, for he gave him to him when he went back to New York last fall, and he’s had him ever since,” cried the first speaker hotly, and with such a fine disregard for the position of his pronouns that it left his hearer in blissful doubt as to whether it had been “Ted” or the other “him” which had been bestowed upon the third “him,” and the reader is probably in the worst muddle of all.

The speakers were two lads of about twelve and fourteen years of age who were standing with several others near a seaside railroad station, and the “him” which was causing the lively discussion was a small

STORIES OF ANIMALS

Irish terrier squatting upon the platform.

As though he was trying to comprehend the cause of the disturbance, his bright, intelligent eyes were turned first on one and then on the other; while one black ear, with its fringe of silky hair, stood straight up, and its mate flopped over as though giving evidence of the divided opinion of its owner.

As the word "Ted" was pronounced, the alert ear became more than ever alert; but when the dispute waxed hotter, its mate took on an even more dejected flop.

"Don't you see how he acts when I say Ted's name, and who do you think taught him all his tricks?"

"How'd I know he *knew* any tricks, do you suppose? I aint seen him do 'em. Better show him off, if he's so mighty smart."

"Now, look a-here, Ray Stannard, if you can't take my word for it, you can't take

STORIES OF ANIMALS

nothin'; for I aint goin' to let any feller stand up and as good as tell me I tell lies."

"I didn't say you told lies! But that dog belonged to Dick Sayre when I left here last summer, and he said then that he wouldn't part with him for nothin'."

"Well, neither he *did*; for Ted gave him his bike lantern for him. Ted always wanted him, and when Dick's mother said she wouldn't let him take him up to New York when she made up her mind to spend the winter there, he cut up awful. But it didn't do a bit of good; she wouldn't let him, and then Ted said he'd like to have him. He was 'most tickled to death to get him, too, for he always wanted him. Then pretty soon everybody went away from the shore, and Ted took the dog up to Philadelphia and kept him all winter. We don't live in flats in Philadelphia, so we can keep dogs, and take care of them, too."

STORIES OF ANIMALS

The high and mighty tone in which this fact was announced proclaimed in Franklin West Hampton a stanch champion of the "City of Brotherly Love."

"Hi! Frank, give it to him, and three cheers for your cracked old Liberty Bell!" shouted a red-headed youth who had arrived upon the scene just in time to overhear the last speech, and snatching off his scrap of a cap, he gave it a toss in the air, expecting to catch it upon his head as it descended. But his plan miscarried, for ere the cap could light upon the brilliant object intended for it, a baseball bat whizzed over the heads of the lads and sent it flying into the middle of the road. What saved the head was a mystery, for the bat swung perilously close, and, as the owner turned sharply around, he nearly fell into the arms of a sturdy young man arrayed from crown to sole in baseball toggery, which, to judge from its color, had seen service.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

He was a handsome fellow and gave evidence of healthy outdoor life; for he was tanned brown as a berry, and the cheeks had a healthy glow which told of the warm, red blood flowing under the skin.

“Here, you kids, what are you all rowing about, anyhow?” he cried, as he caught one lad up in his strong arms and calmly deposited him upon the gutter running along the edge of the low roof of the station.

Meantime, the small dog had nearly twisted himself inside out with delight, and had barked till he was hoarse.

“He said——” “No, I didn’t, I——” “Yes, you did too——” “Yes, he did! Yes, he did!” cried half a dozen voices all at once, until pandemonium reigned.

“Oh, hold on, half a dozen of you, and then maybe I’ll know what one’s getting at. What is it, Frank?”

“Is that dog yours, or isn’t he?” demanded Frank, pointing to the terrier.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Mine? Well, I should like to know whose he is, if he isn’t mine!”

“Well, Ray Stannard sticks to it that he is Dick Sayre’s, and I was just thinkin’ I’d have to punch him to make him believe he is yours, when you came along to settle it.”

“Now, see here, my doubting Thomas, just let me prove my ownership to this pup to your whole and entire satisfaction. Just squat yourselves right down here on your hunkers, you kids, and use your eyes and ears like little men. Sergeant,” to the dog, “Attention!” and up rose the dog upon his hind legs. “Present arms!” and the dog stuck his forefeet straight before him. “That’s as near as he can come to *arms*; see the point, my sons? Right about face; forward, march; double quick—and—charge on that cap yonder, and fetch it here mighty quick. Those may not be just *military* orders, but I *want that cap*.”

Off hopped the Sergeant until the cap

STORIES OF ANIMALS

was reached, and then, evidently concluding that at this point his commanding officer's military orders had ceased, he came down on all-fours, and, pouncing upon Sir Carrot-top's cap, snatched it up, and with a joyous shake rushed back with it to his master.

“ You do credit to your training, my son. Dost still doubt, Thomas? Then behold my greater proof: Sergeant, I've a sneaking notion that I need some baccy. Take this quarter upon the tip of your velvety tongue, and hie thee over to Mr. O'Brien, beyant, and ask him to give you a package of Yale Mixture. Do you mind what I'm saying? Very good. Here is the pipe—observe closely,” and he drew from his pocket a small brier-wood pipe—“ and yonder is the emporium for the weed. Begone! ”

During all this harangue the dog had sat upon the platform and wriggled with excitement. First one foot and then the other

STORIES OF ANIMALS

was lifted, and the stump of a tail was nearly shaken off. Both ears were sticking straight up, and the intelligent eyes fairly spoke. At sight of the pipe he could wait no longer, but spun around like a top. The young man then held the quarter toward him, and, snatching it, he tore across the road and vanished around the corner.

Too astonished for further comment the boys just stood and waited developments. They had not long to wait, for in about three minutes back came the Sergeant tightly clutching a small parcel, which he carefully deposited at his master's feet.

"Now, my friend, we will see whether your intelligence can determine the difference between baccy and bologna. Ah! 'tis well; its fragrance proclaims its worth; so much cannot be said for the bologna. Thomas, art convinced?" and, after giving the boys a good-natured mauling, he reached down and picked up the dog.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“We’re ‘bunkies,’ aren’t we, Sergeant? Come on, then,” and flopping the dog across his shoulders so that its hind legs dangled behind, he started off; a comical enough sight, for the little beast’s legs flapped wildly about, and their owner turned again and again to make laps at the face so close to his own.

“Now, look here, Sergeant, I object to this salivatory love-making, as you have before heard me remark, and when I need a bath, I’ll take a dip in the mighty Atlantic out yonder. So come along down and control your transports,” and he restored his squirming friend to *terra firma*.

Evidently quite satisfied to be upon his own lively legs again, the Sergeant executed a sort of tarantelle, and then rushed off after a bird which was hopping tantalizingly near him.

“Oh, I say, Ted! Ted!” a voice just then

STORIES OF ANIMALS

shouted, "hold on a minute, will you? Heard the news?"

Ted wheeled sharply around and replied:

"No; what news?"

"Why, they've done for Canovas over there in Spain. I say, things are getting pretty hot, aren't they?"

"By George! you don't say so? Here, let me see the paper." Catching the evening paper from his friend's hand, he began to read the extra printed in large type at the top.

"Well, do you know things are getting serious? First thing they know they'll have Uncle Sam putting in *his* oar. If they starve out a few more of those poor wretches down there in Cuba it'll be about time they were taught a lesson, and when it *is* taught, they'll remember it as long as they live."

"Wonder who will be the next applicant for assassination? Don't think I should like to be in his boots. It's one thing to go

STORIES OF ANIMALS

out and take your chance in a fair fight, and quite another to find six inches of cold steel punched into you. What a hot-headed set they are, anyhow," said his friend.

"If they will only get Weyler out of Cuba I believe half the fuss will be over. That man is a brute!" said Ted.

"I'll bet you a fiver that before this time next year there'll be some lively times, and the United States will be right 'in it,' too, my son."

"Shouldn't wonder, and that will mean you and me, too, old man; do you know that?" said Ted, with rather a serious expression on his face.

"Oh, nonsense; if the U. S. get into the mess, they'll send the ships, and they'll do things up in great shape for them in no time. What do they want of us?"

"Wait and see. Ships can't do it all. It will take troops too; see if it doesn't."

"Well, then, they will send the regulars."

STORIES OF ANIMALS

"Maybe; but there'll be volunteers as well, or my name's not Ted Hampton," and they walked on with arms thrown across each other's shoulders and heads bent over the newspaper.

As though depressed by his master's serious tone and expression of face, Sergeant slunk in behind his heels, and with lowered tail and dejected air paced along behind him.

But life was young with all three, and, ere many minutes had passed, other topics crowded out thoughts of the sufferings of our Cuban neighbors and the volcanic state of the Spanish government.

The two friends made their way back to the cottage near the beach where Ted's family were spending the summer, and the lines in the paper were soon forgotten, for thoughts are apt to be fleeting when one is but twenty and life is filled with sunshine.

But it was the last year which Ted, just

STORIES OF ANIMALS

freed from college life and enjoying to the full the freedom which his summer's vacation was giving him, ere he "took up his grind," as he expressed it, in his father's law office in the fall, was destined to know for some time.

CHAPTER III

COMPANY K'S "MASCOT"

"**N**O, old man, you can't come and it's no use to beg. Things will be too hot up there for you," and the speaker stooped down to stroke the head of the small Irish terrier which was tied to a tree in front of a tent. The dog looked at him with almost human intelligence and uttered a low whine. At that instant the order was given to fall in, and a moment later the men were in their places. When the command was given and they marched away, the dog became nearly frantic, and yelped and cried most piteously.

"Look out for him, Tom, will you? Don't let him get away, if you can help it,

STORIES OF ANIMALS

and, if I don't turn up again, get him back home somehow," said the young private, as he passed the surgeon's tent, and spoke to one of his comrades on duty there.

"I'll do my best, Ted; but I'm likely to have something besides a dog to think of," and he nodded a farewell as he turned to enter the tent. The dog continued to yelp and whine, but at last seemed to give up in despair. Throwing himself upon the ground, he buried his face in his paws. To a casual observer he seemed to have fallen asleep, but every now and again a low moaning cry and a quiver of the body gave proof that the dog brain was still active, and the dog heart still longing for the beloved master.

Meanwhile, that master had little time to think of the faithful friend from whom he had never been separated since the day a bicycle lantern had purchased him.

The troops were just boarding the trans-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

port which would convey them to Cuba when a dirty and bedraggled specimen of dogdom had cast himself in a squirming, wriggling heap at the feet of one of the soldiers. Before his master could utter a word, a dozen voices had cried :

“ A mascot! A mascot for Company K! Three cheers for the pup! He’s Ted Hampton’s Sergeant, and he’s true to his man! ”

So the Sergeant was installed. During the voyage he had been the idol of the company, and soon knew each one by name.

At length came the day of Santiago’s fall. The cost was severe; many a brave lad who had faced the cruel Spanish fire would never again return to the United States, and many more lay in a pitiable state upon the ground.

At one place upon the outskirts of the field, and at a point to which he had been sent to cut away the barbed-wire fence, lay a soldier who had apparently given his life in the performance of his duty, for he still

STORIES OF ANIMALS

grasped the heavy cutting nippers. It was a dangerous post, directly in the line of the fire from the blockhouse, and needed a steady hand and strong nerve to attempt it. But the duty had been faithfully performed, as the cut and twisted wire testified, and the performer had paid dearly for his courage. Night was approaching, and ere long the sudden darkness which falls in tropical regions would envelop everything. Searching parties had been out for hours looking for the wounded, but, concealed as he was by the tall grasses, it was no wonder that the soldier who had cut the wires escaped notice.

Hour after hour passed until midnight was announced by the solemn tolling of a distant bell. As the sound died away there was a soft patter in the grass, followed a moment later by the panting of an animal. In the inky darkness no one could have told what sort of beast was

STORIES OF ANIMALS

prowling about and running hither and thither in such an aimless way. Presently the sound ceased altogether. Then came a series of short bounds and yelps, and a dog flung itself upon the silent figure with the wildest demonstrations of joy, which almost instantly changed to pitiful whines and low moans, as he began to lick the man's face and hands.

When this failed to bring a response, the little creature placed its fore paws upon the man's chest, and, throwing its head back, uttered the most heart-rending howls.

At this the man's eyelids quivered slightly and half opened, and the lips partly murmured the one word: "Ser——"

It was enough! Dear little Sergeant wanted no more, and his joy was boundless. But neither cries nor caresses could win another sound, and the poor dog was again in despair. Then, evidently bethinking himself that cries could do little good, he at last

STORIES OF ANIMALS

seemed to decide upon another means of giving the needed aid, and ran off in the direction of the blockhouse. But there all bore the silence of death, and with a sort of whining cry he returned to his charge.

That something must be done, and that right speedily, seemed evident to the dog, and if ever an animal thinks—and who can for one moment doubt it—he did then.

Coming close to the silent figure he sniffed at the clothing, and at last finding the pocket of the campaigning shirt, he carefully drew from it the handkerchief it contained. He could not have chosen more wisely had human intelligence guided, for the significant stains upon it told only too plainly of the owner's condition.

With a final lick upon the dear face, he snatched the handkerchief from the ground and started down the hill as hard as he could tear.

It was, perhaps, two hours later that

STORIES OF ANIMALS

dirty, mud-splashed, and exhausted, he rushed into the surgeon's tent and deposited the tell-tale handkerchief at the feet of the man whom Ted had addressed as Tom, and then dropped gasping beside it.

Rushed as he was with the serious work on hand, the man exclaimed:

"By all that's wonderful, it's the Sergeant back again! Well, after he gnawed his rope and skipped, I never expected to lay eyes on him again. What's this you've found, old man? You seem to have been in the scrimmage yourself, to judge by your looks," and he stopped to pick up the handkerchief.

In one corner were the initials T. V. H., and as the man caught sight of them, he cried:

"Ted's, by all that's good! Where is he, Sergeant?"

The dog jumped to his feet and barked.

"Yes, where is he, old fellow? Come on

STORIES OF ANIMALS

with me and we'll find him," and, going out of the tent, he said to some of the men:

"Boys, the Sergeant has brought us a message from Ted, and to judge from its appearance, he needs us, and needs us right off too. Fetch along a stretcher, two of you, and follow the Sergeant and me. Find him, Sergeant; find Ted."

By this time the dog had somewhat recovered his breath, and, instantly comprehending what was wanted, he dashed off toward Santiago.

"Here, hold on; come back, or we'll lose you, too," called Tom; and taking a bit of string from his pocket he slipped it through the dog's collar. Dawn was breaking when they at last reached the spot where Ted lay, and none too soon. Tenderly lifting their unconscious comrade, they placed him upon the stretcher, then saying:

"Here, you won't add much to the weight, and you've made a good many miles to-day,

STORIES OF ANIMALS

if I'm not mistaken," Tom lifted the tired little dog and laid him upon the stretcher beside Ted, adding as he did so: "Now, don't you stir, but mount guard; do you hear?"

The Sergeant crouched down close to Ted, and did not move a muscle, but the eloquent eyes gave evidence that he understood.

For weeks it seemed as though the Sergeant's faithfulness had been in vain; but at last Ted began to mend, and then the Sergeant outdid himself. As a self-constituted foraging party of one he was a great success, and although often more zealous than wise in his desire to provide dainties, he rarely failed to bring one of some sort and place it upon Ted's cot. It might be a bird, it might be a piece of hard-tack, and once it was a plump rat. But the love which prompted the act was so very marked that even the rat was not disposed of till the Sergeant's back was turned.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

To bring Ted his letters was the joy of the dog's heart, and a dozen times a day would he rush into the mail tent, and, sitting up on his hind legs, beg for a letter. Many times the officer in charge would roll up an old newspaper and give it to the dog, who, delighted to have been successful, instantly carried it to Ted.

He was the idol of the company, and when at last they returned home, the Sergeant, arrayed in a splendid silver collar and a gorgeous blanket, with the company's letter blazoned thereon, was nearly as important as the colonel himself, and when it came time for his "positively last appearance," he excited nearly as much applause.

CHAPTER IV

HAIL TO THE CHIEF!

“**T**HEY'RE coming! They're coming! Hurrah for Dewey! Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!” yelled the crowd which thronged Fifth Avenue's sidewalks, windows, doorsteps, seats, and every available inch of space. “Here they come! Here they come! Here come the West Pointers! Here comes Squadron A! Here come the *Olympia's* men and Dewey! Hurrah! Hurrah!” and the crowd shouted until it could shout no more. On they swung, the vast number of splendid men! Column after column, amidst cheer upon cheer, and the wildest enthusiasm of their proud countrymen.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

No need to tell more. Every American who *could* get there, saw it all; and for those who could not, hundreds of illustrated newspapers and beautifully illustrated magazines told it again and again.

In one of the open windows of a hotel near the arch sat a gay party of ladies and gentlemen, and with them a little girl, waving and cheering hardest of all.

Owing to the necessary changes in the formation of the columns when passing beneath the Dewey Arch at Twenty-third Street, there was more or less delay just at this point, and many of the regiments were forced to halt before reaching it. As they did so the weary men grounded their arms, and stood at ease. Just in front of the hotel stood an infantry regiment, and, as the men rested, water was passed to them by colored men who carried it in large tin cans.

Company K was embroidered upon the

STORIES OF ANIMALS

colors of the company directly under the window above mentioned, and as one of the soldiers reached to take a glass of water from the darky "cup-bearer," a small dog, gayly bedecked in a scarlet blanket, but looking completely fagged out, cast himself upon the ground at the man's feet.

"Done up, old man?" the soldier asked. "Well, you haven't much further to *pungle* along. Wish I could get some water for you, though," he said, as he drained the glass. At sight of the water, the dog rose to his hind feet and began to march like one of his comrades.

"Here, give me some more, Sambo," said the soldier to the darky, and, quite unsuspecting, the man filled the glass again.

The soldier took it and, setting it down on the pavement, said: "Fall to, old chap."

"Here, sah! What fo' you gwine ter let dat dawg drink out ob dat glass fo' what I's got ter gib ter de odder mens?"

STORIES OF ANIMALS

The soldier did not reply; but the dog, having drained the last drop, looked up to beg for more.

“Fill it again, Sambo,” he said in a tone which left no room for dispute, and “Sambo” filled it.

Taking two dimes from his pocket he gave them to the darky, saying, as he did so: “There, that buys both glass and the water, I guess,” and calmly slipped the glass into his knapsack, adding as he did so: “I’ll keep it as a *souvenir*, Sambo.” Sambo looked at him as though he fancied he had lost his senses.

This had been closely observed by the party in the window, and just as the order was given for the men to fall into rank, the child cried out: “It’s the Sergeant we found, mamma! It’s the Sergeant! I know it is. Sergeant, Sergeant!” she called from the window. The dog pricked up his ears in an instant, and, uttering two or three short

STORIES OF ANIMALS

barks, spun around and then rushed to take his place at the head of the company. The soldier who had given him the water looked up to the window and smiled, and then, saluting the child, said:

“Yes, little lassie, he is Sergeant, sure enough; and Company K’s ‘mascot,’ and *my* ‘bunkie,’ and we’ve been all through the campaign.”

“Three cheers for the Sergeant and his bunkie!” shouted one of the gentlemen of the party, and the cheer was taken up and found an echo again and again with the happy crowd.

Not long after this Ruth Heath went with her father and mother to one of the Armory receptions, and there again found the Sergeant, who, with his company, was being entertained by the New York regiment; his own belonging to William Penn’s State. There they learned his eventful history from the time they had befriended him, and those

STORIES OF ANIMALS

who read it may believe as much of it as they choose. But this *I will* assert: the Sergeant *really* lived, and, for aught I know, still lives and is as frisky as ever.

A LITTLE DERELICT

A LITTLE DERELICT

CHAPTER I

A STRANGE VOYAGE

WHAT a big sea it seemed! Water everywhere, and filled with floating wreckage of every description, as though some giant had picked up a city, crushed it in his mighty hand, and dropped it into the bay. An awesome sight for older eyes, but it evidently filled one little being with delight, for she clapped her hands joyously and bobbed up and down in her strange boat as it rose and fell upon the waves.

What a story that boat told! Little had its designer dreamed that it would ever venture upon such a voyage. A house-boat indeed, its very perfection rendering it

STORIES OF ANIMALS

pathetic, for not an article in it but testified to a woman's gentle touch. The world knows the story only too well, and Galveston will never forget it.

Amidst all the horrors that one house floated perfect, except for the loss of its roof. In a second-story room, utterly unaware of her peril, and happy as a bird, sat a sunny-haired little child; a bonny, bonny little maid, laughing and singing to herself as the house swayed up and down. A lone little waif in God's great world, floating God only knew whither.

On swayed the house and louder sang the child. Presently a queer ramshackle boat drew near. It looked as though it must swamp the next moment, but was no more forlorn than the half-clad boy who paddled it with an old piece of board, for both had evidently encountered rough weather. He was peering anxiously around him and soon neared the floating house. The boat was

STORIES OF ANIMALS

nearly on a level with the second-story windows, and as he approached he heard the sound of the child's voice.

“Lawdy me!” he cried, “who’s a-singin’ out in this awful place?”

The child heard him and, springing to her feet, executed a funny little dance and clapped her hands as she answered:

“Faye’s a-tingin’! Faye’s a-tingin’ cause the house dance so!”

“But you mustn’t stay in there! Will you come along in the boat with me? I’ll take good care of you, little lady. Is your ma in there, too?”

“No, mother’s done wid big man. Her went to sleep wight so,—” throwing out her hands and casting herself face downward upon the floor, little realizing all she was revealing. “Faye runned into the nursery to find Juno, and den big man weached wight in the windie and picked my little mother wight up; he didn’t see Faye. He

STORIES OF ANIMALS

took little mother off in the boat and Juno jumped wight out the windie and swummed away after the boat in all the wain and left Faye *all* alone. But Faye not fwaid, little mother often leave Faye and Juno, and say: 'Faye be dood dirl till little mother tum back.' And Faye's been *weal* dood, but she is so so hungwry."

The boy looked at the little beauty as though she were a being from another world, and said again:

"Will you come with me now, and we'll try to find your ma."

"Ess, Faye 'll tum, but must get Jemima first. Touldn't leave my pwecious child," and running into the nursery she took a tattered rag doll from her crib.

At last all was ready, and pushing off the boat, the boy took up his paddle to paddle where? He had no home in this great world, and hers would soon find an anchorage in the bottom of Galveston Bay.

CHAPTER II

NOT A SPARROW SHALL FALL

THE search for poor Jimmy's friends was soon ended, for, when questioned by those who had taken the little voyagers in charge after they came ashore, he answered: "Never had none as I knows on. I lived along somehow, and when the flood came I got into the old boat and paddled around to see what I could find, and I found the little lady almost the fust thing."

From Faye they could learn but little; she was "just Faye; papa's and little mother's sweetheart," and told them the same story she had already told Jimmy.

So nothing remained for little Faye but "Jemima," and her "Dimmie," from whom

STORIES OF ANIMALS

she positively declined to be separated. Poor little Jimmy, a small knight errant upon the face of God's great world, homeless, and alone, yet one of His little ones.

It was difficult, notwithstanding the aid from outside sources, to find a home for the children, but at last a place was found for them at an orphan asylum in the northern part of the State, and after a few days they were placed there, and soon other duties came to crowd out all the memory of them. It was a bitter enough change for both, although from entirely different standpoints. For the child bred in affection and luxury the change was cruel indeed, while to the boy, accustomed to perfect freedom, it was the life of a caged bird.

Moreover, without fully appreciating the reason, he was keenly alive to Faye's unhappiness, and, after witnessing it for four months, resolved to put an end to it if it were possible to do so. A northern Texas

STORIES OF ANIMALS

winter was now upon them, and one afternoon, during one of the brief moments he could steal to be with his idol, he laid his plans for her release, as well as his own. Hidden behind the great stove in the hall, with Faye held close in his arms, he laid his plan like a little general, and ere many hours passed they were carried into effect.

The empty cattle cars jolted onward, the engine puffing and struggling to drag the long train over the snow-covered tracks. The air was filled with whirling flakes, and the cold intense. Huddled in the corner of one car was a freight of which the car owners little recked. Two small figures rolled up in an old blanket gave little heed to schedule time, for freedom made even the untidy car attractive. They were eating a luncheon, frugal to the last degree. At least one was; the other was saying:

“Eat it every bit, Faye; Dimmie aint

STORIES OF ANIMALS

hungry. We're most there, I reckon, and I wouldn't wonder if papa and little mother was a-waitin' for us."

It had been a long ride to Jimmy, who had fasted and watched that Faye might be cared for and fed, for there was nothing wrong with her appetite, and she had eaten and slept as only a perfectly healthy baby can. The supply of food which he had managed to "swipe" from the asylum was now consumed, and where their next meal was to come from kept poor Jimmy guessing. He had laid his plans with wonderful forethought, taking as Faye's right all the food and covering he could lay hands upon.

Slower and slower crawled the train, and at last came to a standstill, side-tracked at a little prairie town barely a hundred miles south of the big city which lay beyond the deep drifts.

"We can't go no further, Faye, so come

STORIES OF ANIMALS

along with Jimmy. We'll go up to the town over yonder, and maybe they'll invite us to take dinner at the hotel," said the boy as he lifted Faye from the car.

It is bitter to tell of the return to Galveston of Faye's father to find the city in ruins, his home swept away, his wife and child he knew not where. While North on business news of the terrible disaster had reached him, and he had hurried South as fast as steam could carry him.

Then followed weeks of almost hopeless searching from one end of the city to the other, with repeated visits to the site of the old home, as though some power which he could not withstand led him back to the scene of his former happiness. It was during one of these visits, and as he stood gazing despairingly at the ruins of his former home, that he was startled by a huge St. Bernard dog, which sprang upon him with wild demonstrations of joy.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

It was Juno, the pet of the household, and little Faye's constant companion.

She had never given up her search for Faye, but had gone out day after day on her quest, and rarely a day passed that she did not visit the site of the old home. The sagacious creature needed no commands, and within half an hour had led Mr. Osborne straight to "Little Mother's" bedside.

It was many weeks before Mrs. Osborne was able to join her husband in the seemingly hopeless search for Faye, but the mother's heart would *not* give her up. Winter was upon them when rumor at last guided them to the asylum, where they learned that the children had run away and all trace of them had been lost. Jimmy had laid his plans only too well. Poor little drops in the ocean of humanity, they were quickly swallowed up and effectually lost.

Heart-broken and despairing, they started

STORIES OF ANIMALS

for Chicago, Mrs. Osborne's home, but when within a few hours' ride of it found themselves held prisoners by a Western blizzard and forced to take refuge in a small prairie town for the night. Comfortable quarters were secured in the one hotel the town boasted, and after leaving the faithful Juno to the care of the clerk for the night, they sought their much-needed rest, and there we must leave them for a little.

CHAPTER III

OLD DOLLY'S DISCOVERY

“**L**OOK out, Dolly, or you'll be down! Growing old, old lady?” cried Dr. Sprague to the intelligent mare who, for the past twelve years, had served him so faithfully. Dolly replied by an expressive snort, shook her head, and refused to advance a step.

“What have you come upon, old lass?” he asked, for he had spent so many hours upon her back that he had almost grown to regard her as a human being, and often held long, if rather one-sided, conversations with her.

It was a wild midwinter night, and the doctor and his Dolly had traveled many a

STORIES OF ANIMALS

mile since nightfall, and were nearing a cozy home and snug stable when she made her discovery. He knew her too well to urge her forward, so dismounting, felt about in the drifts, saying:

“Your scent and sight beat mine, Doll; what is it? Good God!” he exclaimed, nor did it savor of irreverence.

Before him, covered with nature’s downiest coverlid, lay two little figures; one sound asleep and wrapped in an old blanket, the other, poorly clad, and fallen into the sleep which ere long would know no waking.

Dolly poked and nosed the little wayfarers, as though trying to say:

“Wake up! This is no place to sleep on such a night. Doctor and I know better than that.”

Then she carried a triple burden, and an hour later Jimmy opened his eyes in a warm, cheerful room to find Faye stand-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

ing beside him, rosy and fresh as ever, patting his cheek and asking in her sweet little voice:

“Is you doin’ to wate up now, Dimmie dear?”

CHAPTER IV

“ALL FOR DIMMIE AND ME”

JUNO, left alone with the hotel clerk, became very restless, and at last, going up to the man, looked at him with her soft, intelligent eyes, and then laid her great paw upon his knee.

He smiled as he asked: “Want to go out, old girl? Well, go on then, but don’t get lost, or I’ll catch fits.”

It was nearly midnight, but Juno had prowled so much of late that it had become a habit. She started off upon her exploring expedition, and was soon plowing her way through the deep snow. Far down the street a lamp flickered in the gusts of wind. The snow had ceased to fall, but lay in mon-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

strous drifts. Juno made her way through them to the house in front of which the light shone, and stalking upon the piazza began to sniff about in the way which had become her habit. As she reached the front door she was greeted by a series of sharp barks from within, and a moment later the door was opened and a small sky terrier literally tumbled through it.

“Hello, Peggy, what’s up? Do you think you can eat up that big dog?” asked a pleasant voice.

Juno looked at the speaker with her eloquent eyes, and read, as only children and animals can, its owner’s kindly nature.

“Come along in, if you want to; we seem to be rescuing all sorts of wayfarers to-night.”

Juno waved her big plummy tail, entered the brightly lighted hall, and stopped short. Up went her head, her ears were alert, and the next instant she was bounding up the

STORIES OF ANIMALS

stairs as though gone mad, for just then a little voice above cried:

“All for Dimmie and me! All for Dimmie and me!” as the doctor’s wife set two bowls of warm milk and big slices of graham bread before two nearly famished children.

Then was that good lady nearly frightened into fits by a huge St. Bernard dog bounding into the room, knocking Faye heels over head, and tipping over her bread and milk.

There lay Faye flat upon her back, utterly undisturbed by the white sea, with its brown islands, in which she floated, while Juno with whines of delight licked the child’s face and hands, and whimpered over her as though she were one of her own puppies restored to her.

Faye clasped her arms about the shaggy neck and cried in a joyous voice:

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Juno tummed for Faye! Little Mother sent Juno to fetch Faye and Dimmie!”

Half an hour later the Doctor rang up the sleepy clerk, for Juno had led him straight back to the hotel, and ere another one had passed Faye was gathered into “Little Mother’s” arms.

No words can describe that meeting.

Jimmy looked upon it in amazement; such joy and intense love were a revelation to him. But he was not forgotten, for the baby voice which had grown so dear to him cried out:

“Take my Dimmie too, Little Mother, take my Dimmie, too!” and poor little Jimmy, who had never known love or home, a little derelict on life’s great ocean, was drawn into a safe and sheltering harbor where he would evermore find protection from life’s storms and tempests, and the hungry little soul would be filled to overflowing.

MADGE HARDING'S
"CURMUDGE"

MADGE HARDING'S "CURMUDGE"

PART I

"CURMUDGE"

"**N**O! 'Taint a mite er use ter cry and take on; you can't keep that tarnal dog, and that settles it. Where on earth did yer git him anyhow?"

"I found him, Aunt Lucinda, and he is so good, and I love him so."

"Then you'd better find somethin' else tew settle yer love onter. There's 'nough sight better things in this world than a yaller dog, and—*out* you go." The last words were addressed to the small, scraggy

STORIES OF ANIMALS

dog which stood damp and shivering in the kitchen door, and begging with all the eloquence of beseeching eyes and a very suggestive wag of his stubby tail, to be allowed to remain indoors.

As the woman spoke she caught up her broom, and instantly dashed any hopes the poor beast may have harbored by advancing towards him with it raised, as though she intended sweeping him out of existence. At sight of it the dog fled, and the little girl who had spoken in his behalf flung herself upon the stiff kitchen chair, crying out in a passion of tears:

“ You won’t let me have *anything* to love or pet! You made Job drown my kitty because she lapped the cream off the milk, and she wouldn’t have done it if you’d have let me feed her; you sent my pet lamb off to be killed, and then whipped me because I wouldn’t eat her; and you wouldn’t let me keep the pigeons Mrs. Knowles gave me

STORIES OF ANIMALS

'cause they cooed so loud; and now you are driving away my Curmudge just because he makes feet-marks on your kitchen, and I hate—hate—*hate* you!” the last words were uttered in a hysterical shriek, as though the poor little soul could endure no more.

“Hoity toity, miss! This is pretty doin's! Do you think I'm goin' to let you stand and talk to me this way?” and she grasped the child roughly by the shoulder, and shook her with no gentle hand.

“I don't care *what* you do to me now; I don't, I don't, I don't! I hate to live in this place and be scolded all the time for just nothing at all. Mamma *never* scolded me when I was home with her, but petted and loved me *dearly*, and loved my kitty, too, and let me feed and take care of her. And I *want* my mamma, oh! I want my mamma dreadful!” and again a wild storm of sobs shook the slender frame.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

She was a pretty child, rather delicate-looking, for her great blue eyes and golden curls, which even close cropping could not subdue, gave her a singularly infantile expression. But she had a brave, courageous spirit hidden away behind the baby face, and never hesitated to take the part of the oppressed.

“Well, you can’t have your mother, and that settles it. If she hadn’t clear spoiled yer, *I* wouldn’t er had all this trouble I’ve had fer nigh onter two year, and I’ll be thankful ’nough when she an’ yer pa get back ter take yer away. You’ve near ’bout pestered the life out er me. Are yer goin’ ter stop that screechin’, an’ behave yerself, I’d like ter know?” and she gave the child another shake.

The little girl suddenly sprang to her feet and, darting to the door, planted herself before it as she cried indignantly:

“No, I’m *not*! You may whip me all

STORIES OF ANIMALS

you want to, you may shake me, and you may keep me in the cellar *hours*, but I *will* love Curmudge, just as I loved my Kitty-wink and my Floss and my pigeons! How *can* you be so cruel? Didn't *you* ever love anything yourself? I don't believe you even love Uncle Beniah; you wouldn't scold him all the time if you did." How the big blue eyes flashed as the words poured from the child's mouth! It seemed as though she were beside herself with indignation, and having endured all it was possible for mortal to endure, her soul now arose in rebellion against such injustice.

Her aunt looked at her in amazement. Heretofore the meekest and most submissive of little creatures, she had proven a most gratifying subject for the harsh, irritable woman to vent her temper upon, and never had she failed to do so upon the slightest provocation, or, indeed, no provocation at all. She had hectored and irri-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

tated her sensitive little niece until the child's disposition was in a fair way to be utterly ruined.

When Madge had been placed in her aunt's care two years before, she was as sunny a bit of childhood as one could well wish for. At seven years of age she had never yet learned the meaning of the word anger. Her father's and mother's idol, she had grown up in an atmosphere of love and sunshine where truly, "Joy was duty, and love was law," and in return had given a child's boundless affection. They were people of very moderate means, but the suburban town of Somerville held no sweeter home than theirs. Mr. Harding held a Government position, and was ordered to South America to remain two years. This was shortly after Madge's birthday and it was truly a serious question. To leave his family behind him him meant a long separation which he

STORIES OF ANIMALS

dreaded to contemplate, but to take Madge seemed equally unwise. It was at last decided to place her with Mr. Harding's married sister, whose home was in Barnstable, and with whom they had every reason to suppose the child would be perfectly happy, once the shock of separation had passed away. Mrs. Moseby was several years older than her brother, and he had seen very little of her since her marriage, a number of years prior to his own. Consequently, he could not appreciate the change which the years had wrought in a disposition which had never been considered a sweet one by those who knew her best. Somehow, Lucinda Moseby seemed to have exchanged natures with her brother, for, strange to say, his was as gentle and tender as a woman's, while hers held a vein of harshness that was almost cruel. As a young girl it had not been so marked, but having married a man with more good

STORIES OF ANIMALS

nature than strength of character, she at once ruled him, and as the years advanced her rule became a petty despotism. Into this home, after all had been arranged by letter, was Madge brought. Mr. Harding and his pretty wife went with their treasure and remained with her two nights, but long before the two nights had passed Mrs. Harding's heart misgave her, although she bravely refrained from saying anything to her husband. She realized that it was now too late to make a change, and bade her little daughter good-by with a smiling face, but with a nearly breaking heart.

Madge was too sunny to understand the chill atmosphere into which she had come, and had her aunt not been adamant, she could not have resisted the winsome child who instantly won the hearts of all upon the farm and made her old uncle her slave; at least, as much as he dared be. His wife never knew what the child's presence meant

STORIES OF ANIMALS

to the lonely, childless man, for she was never allowed to witness the little affectionate scenes which took place out in the hay fields, or in the big barns.

Kittywink, the pussy which Madge had carried with her from her Somerville home, was the little girl's only pet; they were never separated till the evil day that Kittywink, driven desperate by hunger, had found the pantry door open and filled herself so full that she simply could not stir, and there she had been found in her guilt. Nothing could have afforded Mrs. Moseby greater satisfaction, for the excuse she had long wanted was now found; poor Kittywink paid the penalty of her misdeed, and Madge nearly broke her heart. Her next pet had been the lamb, and although her uncle had protested when told to send it along with the rest which were to be killed, the aunt, as usual, had overruled; she "wouldn't stand no sich pesky foolishness," and poor

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Floss” had been served at her little mistress’ table, and the weeping little mistress had been whipped because she had flatly refused to partake of her tender flesh.

The pigeons, too, had made a pie, and by that time little goldilocks had begun to learn something of the world.

Then a long interval had passed without any pet, when one day the child, now nearly nine years old, and about as lonely and forlorn as a child so situated could well be, was sent to the town of Barnstable upon an errand. As she was returning home a loud uproar behind her caused her to turn around just in time to have a small yellow dog literally plunge into her arms and knock her flat. Only one glance was needed to explain his terror; a tin can had been tied firmly to his tail, and a howling mob of boys was behind him.

Instantly clasping the small, quivering

STORIES OF ANIMALS

animal in her arms, Madge arose to her feet a little fury:

“Stand back! Stand back! How dare you?” she cried, her eyes flashing fire. “If you come one step nearer I’ll throw this iron stand at you as sure as you live!”

“Hi! go for her, Tom; jerk the pup out of her arms,” yelled one valiant worthy, as he pushed a small youth toward Madge.

She did not yield an inch, but stood glaring at her tormentors and holding fast to the dog. Such courage could not fail to have its effect, and with jeers and gibes the young scamps gradually fell back. When the last had vanished, Madge put the dog down, and carefully untying the can from his tail, soon had him coaxed and petted into quiet and confidence. Then, placing the string about his neck, she led him home. Job, the hired man, saw her first, and crying out, “Hello, Madge! Where did you get your *curmudgeon*?” had promptly christened the dog.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Is that his name?” asked Madge innocently. “How did you know it, Job? Do you know who he belongs to?”

Job laughed: “As likely to be that as any, aint it? What do you reckon ye be a-goin’ ter do with him, anyhow?”

“I don’t know, Job. I’m afraid Aunt Lucinda won’t let me keep him, and I want him so much.”

Job went off toward the barn muttering something about “these durned wimmin folks that think they can rule the roost,” and Madge, with fear and trembling, followed behind him with her treasure, which she tied up in the barn and admonished to “be a good dog and not to make a sound till she should come back.”

For three days she had kept him concealed, and had managed to feed him with scraps she had saved from the food she daily carried to the poultry. Then came one of the cold, stormy days which so often come

STORIES OF ANIMALS

to New England early in October, and Madge not being permitted to go to the barn, poor Curmudge had been desolate indeed. Job had smuggled his food to him, but Curmudge had a soul above scraps when they could not be eaten in the presence of his adopted mistress. Not a mouthful would he eat, and at last, growing desperate, he had gnawed his slender rope and rushed to the house. Poor Curmudge! you little guessed the results which were destined to follow.

Bounding into the kitchen, he precipitated himself into Madge's lap, whining with joy and lapping her face as he wriggled himself nearly to bits. He was muddy and wet, and the tracks he left upon the freshly scrubbed kitchen floor acted upon Mrs. Moseby as a red rag does upon a bull. The result was the opening scene of this story.

"You go upstairs to your room, miss,"

STORIES OF ANIMALS

said her aunt, when she had recovered from her astonishment, and then went down cellar for her mop to wipe up the tracks the dog had made.

Opening the kitchen door, Madge took the wet, scraggy dog into her arms, and, kissing him, said:

“Don’t you mind, Curmudge. Go out to the barn like a good dog and wait for me. I’ll come pretty soon,” and then slipped back and ran up to her own room, and was seen no more that afternoon. Tea-time came, but Madge did not appear. Her aunt called her from the foot of the kitchen stairs, but receiving no reply, said:

“Humph! let her have her sulk out. Don’t ketch me knucklin’ down to no splice’t youngun.”

“Now, Lucinda, hadn’t ye better see what ails the leetle creeter? Like ’nough she’ll fret herself down sick; she aint over an’ above strong.”

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“ You shet up, Beniah Moseby. I guess I’m capable o’ managin’ that little spitfire, an’ if I aint I don’t want none o’ *your* help,” and Beniah dutifully “ shet up.”

By nine o’clock the house was locked up for the night and enveloped in darkness. Ten struck on the old kitchen clock, and as the last stroke died away a small figure crept down the back stairs which led into the kitchen. The fire in the stove had not died out, and the glow of the embers shone through the cracks where the lids had been left partly open. By the light which was thus reflected upon the ceiling Madge made her way into the buttery, and finding there a good supply from the night’s tea, she placed in the satchel she carried a half loaf of bread, some cold meat, and a piece of cake, and, returned to the kitchen, she pinned upon the table, where it would be sure to catch her aunt’s eye, the following message:

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“I am going away. You don’t love me and you don’t love *anybody*. I’m going to find papa and mamma, for *they* love me and will love Kummuge to. You needent ter come after me for you won’t find me. I love Uncle Benier. Papa will pay you for the bread and meat I took and I’ve got my dollar he gave me before he went away.

“MADGE.”

Noiselessly slipping the bolt she stepped out into the pitchy night. Once outside she seemed to breathe freer, and, sitting upon the doorstep, drew on her shoes which, until now, she had carried in her hands. Happily, they were stout little shoes, and would serve to keep the small feet dry, for, although the wind had ceased blowing, a drizzling rain was falling, and the October night was damp and cold. Scarcely had she gotten the shoes on when there was the sound of pattering feet, and with a low

STORIES OF ANIMALS

whine little Curmudge cast himself at her feet.

“Good Curmudge! Good doggie! Hush, don’t make any noise, and we’ll soon be away from this dreadful place.” She then placed a string around his neck and lifting up her satchel, set off at a brisk pace with the dog trotting beside her.

PART II

THE RESCUED PROVES A RESCUER

DARK though the night, Madge was undaunted, and laid her plans with the shrewdness which only the training of the past two years could have developed. It is a pitiful thing to find a little child forced to deceit through fear of ill-treatment, and may the good Lord forgive those who can be held responsible for such a condition. They have desecrated the "holy of holies."

Instead of going toward Barnstable, she turned her steps toward East Sandwich, where she was quite unknown. It was a long walk, but she was a brave little body and plodded along in the dark with never a thought of fear. What would have been

STORIES OF ANIMALS

the mother's feelings could she even have guessed at the child's situation at that moment? I will leave that question for some mother to answer.

Just as the clock struck twelve, little Madge, who never before in all her short life had been out of her bed at such an hour, came to the deserted railway station. Not a soul was in sight, and the door of the station was securely fastened. Madge was not discouraged, but walked to the end of the platform and there found a small out-building in which the men employed about the station kept their tools. The door was partly open, and in Madge walked. A pile of bagging in one corner offered an inviting resting-place to a tired little girl and an equally tired little dog, and five minutes later she was fast asleep with her Curmudge held tightly in her arms. The shriek of an up train wakened her at dawn, but she did not stir from her hiding-place. East Sandwich

STORIES OF ANIMALS

is not a particularly lively place, and no one was at the station for that early train. Two hours later the Boston local train would come along, but Madge did not know a Boston local train from any other, and her sole desire had been to get to *some* train and go somewhere; anywhere away from Aunt Lucinda's scolding. So when she went into the station and laid one of her twenty-five-cent pieces on the ticket-master's shelf, he, supposing her to be one of the children going into Sandwich to school, or on an errand, gave her a ticket for that place and some change into the bargain. Madge's idea regarding the value of money was as vague as her idea of trains, so putting her ticket and change in her satchel, she went out on the platform. As she did so some signals at the end of the station changed their position and a moment later a sharp whistling of "down brakes" caused the station master and half a dozen loungers

STORIES OF ANIMALS

who stood about, to run to the end of the platform, crying as they did so: "Something wrong up ahead, Bill, or the express wouldn't be held up here." The great snorting, panting engine drew up to the station as the conductor went on to ascertain why his train had been signaled to stop.

No one had time to notice the child and her yellow dog, and poor, trusting Madge stepped aboard. A moment later whatever had been wrong was righted and our intrepid little traveler was speeding away from East Sandwich. Presently the conductor came through the train, and seeing Madge, stopped in amazement. He was a good-natured, elderly man who had children and grandchildren of his own, and for their sakes had warm spot in his heart for all little people.

"Hullo, little lady, when did you come aboard? and where are you going?"

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“ I’m going to see papa and mamma,” replied Madge.

“ And who may ‘papa and mamma’ be, and where do they live? ”

“ They are Mr. and Mrs. Harding, and they live near Boston.”

“ But you were not on this train when we left Barnstable.”

“ No, I got on at East Sandwich.”

“ At East Sandwich! ” in surprise; “ let me see your ticket, little missie.”

Madge produced her ticket and the conductor looked dumfounded.

“ Who gave you this ticket and who put you aboard this train, little one? ”

“ No one; I put myself aboard because I want to see papa and mamma so badly, and Aunt Lucinda scolded me so much and said I couldn’t have Curmudge, and so I came, and *please* don’t send me back, for I must see mamma,” plead poor Madge, almost in tears.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

Suspecting that something was seriously wrong, the conductor drew her upon one knee and taking Curmudge upon the other said:

"Now, dearie, tell me all about it," and soon had the whole pathetic little history.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" was all he said.

Meantime, Curmudge had made up his mind that all was as it should be, and proceeded to demonstrate his approval by trying to lick the conductor's face.

"Here, old chap, do that by proxy, will you, and let your missie represent you," cried the conductor, laughing. "Now, little lass, don't you worry, but stay right here all snug and eat your breakfast, you and your pet, and when we get to Boston we'll see about finding papa and mamma."

Madge opened her satchel to take out her breakfast and as she did so a slip of paper

STORIES OF ANIMALS

fell to the floor. The conductor picked it up and upon it read: "Mrs. B. F. Harding, 27 ——— St., Somerville, Mass."

"Good!" he cried, "now we know just where to send you," little dreaming that for two years the house had held no occupant; for Madge had been too young to realize that the old home was no longer hers, and her aunt had never taken the trouble to enlighten her.

Boston was reached in due time, and, placing her in the care of one of the employees of the station who was about to return to his home in Somerville after his night duties, the kind conductor bade her not forget him and said good-by.

Off went Madge with her new guide and soon reached Somerville.

"I don't see what ails Curmudge," she said as they were walking along, and the dog was tugging at his leader with might and main.

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“Acts as if he knew the way home,” replied the young man, laughing.

“No; he has never been here before. He came here from Barnstable.”

“Perhaps he has friends here and would like to visit them.”

Madge looked up with a puzzled expression, but before she could say anything, her escort stopped at the corner of the street, and pointing down it to a certain house, said:

“Do you see that white house down there? That’s yours; can——” but before he could finish, she cried:

“Oh! I know it! I know it! It’s *home*. Thank you ever so much,” and dashed off with Curmudge bounding beside her.

Poor little trusting soul! she reached the house only to find it bare and deserted, with no sign of living being. She passed through the gate and up the front steps. A pull at the bell produced the desolate sound a bell

STORIES OF ANIMALS

makes in an empty house. She waited and then walked around to the back of the house, but there all was equally deserted.

“Oh! Curmudge, Curmudge, what shall I do? What *shall* I do? Papa and mamma don't live here any more,” and burying her face in the dog's shaggy coat she sobbed as though her heart would break.

Curmudge whined and licked her cheek, and tried to comfort her in his dog way. After a little the sobs ceased, but she was utterly dumb with despair. “But I'm glad we came away. I *am* glad, and we'll *never* go back, Curmudge; no, not if we die.”

Curmudge seemed to agree, but evinced a disposition to explore a little on his own account. Madge had let his string drop, and, finding himself free, he ran toward the front gate and then ran back to her; the while barking as though he had something to tell her.

“What is the matter, Curmudge? What

STORIES OF ANIMALS

do you want to do? You don't know anybody here," she said wearily. But Curmudge evidently knew a thing or two.

"I'm so tired I don't believe I *can* come, but I'll try," said Madge, and she arose to follow her pet.

Curmudge was beside himself. He pranced and capered and spun around like a wild thing. Tugging at his string, he dragged the weary child along, through street after street, till at least he reached the business portion of the town. A block or so down this brought him to a low building, over the door of which was a sign bearing the name, G. F. Roberts, Real Estate. The door was not tightly latched, and bounding against it with a joyous bark, Curmudge jerked his string from Madge's grasp, and dashed into the office just as a lady's voice was heard to say:

"How glad I am, Mr. Roberts, that we can get our old house back again. I was so

STORIES OF ANIMALS

afraid we would not be able to, having arrived so unexpectedly. We only reached Boston last night, and——” Her sentence was interrupted by Curmudge, who tore across the room, and jumping upon Mr. Roberts’ lap, began to lick his face and whine like an insane thing.

“Why, Dandy! Dandy Roberts, where in this world did you come from? We never expected to set eyes on you again!” But ere “Dandy Roberts” could give a satisfactory account of himself, a cry from the lady caused Mr. Roberts to spring to his feet.

“Madge! My darling, my darling! How came you here?” and a moment later poor, weary little Madge was sobbing in her mother’s arms.

“Oh, mamma, mamma! I’m so glad I found you! Curmudge did it! Curmudge did it! If it hadn’t been for him I’d never have known where you were.”

STORIES OF ANIMALS

“ Who is ‘ Curmudge,’ my pet? ”

“ *He* is,” pointing to the little terrier, who was now standing in the middle of the floor looking with his questioning, intelligent eyes from one to the other, as though trying to learn what he *had* done.

When explanations were made it was learned that Curmudge, whose real name was Dandy, had belonged to Mr. Roberts from puppyhood. During the previous summer, while they were spending the season at Yarmouth, on Cape Cod, he had been stolen, and they had never seen sign of him till he dashed into the office, to which he led his rescuer, little Madge, and had himself assumed the character of rescuer.

It seemed as though Madge’s guardian angel must have cared for her and brought her safely to the one place in the world where her mother’s arms were ready to receive her. Mr. and Mrs. Harding had returned a month earlier than they had ex-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

pected to, and although they had written the joyful tidings to Mrs. Moseby, she had not seen fit to enlighten Madge. Had she done so she might have saved herself the torture she experienced when she awakened to find Madge gone, and all traces of her vanished like the morning dew.

The commotion which ensued upon the discovery can better be imagined than described. Now that a serious calamity had come upon her, Mrs. Moseby was almost demented, and rushed about looking into all sorts of impossible places and calling Madge's name incessantly. But, of course, her search was unavailing; Madge and Curmudge had disappeared as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed them up. As the day drew to its close, and still no tidings came, Mrs. Moseby lapsed into a frame of mind which would have been pathetic had she not merited all the anxiety she was experiencing, and the un-

STORIES OF ANIMALS

lovable and unloving woman was now reaping the harvest she had sown. Poor Uncle Beniah's grief was truly pathetic to witness. With tears rolling down his cheeks he searched and scoured the entire neighborhood; again and again returning to the house to vent his righteous wrath upon his miserable wife, who, miracle of miracles, made no reply. It was not until the following morning that a telegram relieved their anxiety, and, to her dying day, Lucinda Moseby remembered the torture of those twenty-four hours.

Meanwhile, at Somerville, Madge was as happy as a little queen. In less than an hour after Mrs. Harding had found Madge electricity had carried the news to Mr. Harding in Boston, and as fast as trolley cars could take him, he had ridden to Somerville to learn the wonderful news.

A week later they were once more established in their home, and Curmudge with

STORIES OF ANIMALS

them. Mr. Roberts had brought him, and placing him in Madge's arms, said: "There, my little girl, he belongs to you more than he does to me. While I would not have accepted a hundred dollars for him last summer, I now gladly give him to his little rescuer, since, when the opportunity was afforded him, he repaid his obligation by rescuing her."

To say that the dog lives "in the lap of luxury" but feebly conveys an idea of Curmudge's present surroundings. A handsome collar with the name "Dandy Curmudge," engraved on the plate, adds greatly to his appearance, and upon him is lavished the suppressed and stifled love of the last two miserable years; for, as his little mistress expresses it: "Now I have my papa and mamma to love *me*, and they let me love and pet Curmudge all I want to."





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